

PIETRO DELLA VALLE'S LATIN GEOGRAPHY OF
SAFAVID IRAN (1624-1628): INTRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that Pietro della Valle's Latin geography of the Safavid Empire is important for taking a middle ground between two common tendencies of early modern authors in Catholic and Protestant Europe when writing about Western Asia and Northern Africa. While cartographers and mapmakers—in Venice, Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Paris—privileged new information (from travelers) in their choice of place names, those who wrote on the history or geography of these regions often suppressed local knowledge, giving preference to terms from ancient Greek and Latin history and geography, enriched by reference to the Bible. Della Valle, while traveling in Ottoman and Safavid territories, made intensive efforts to learn major local languages and acquire information about contemporary political, cultural, and physical geography, as documented in his diary and the original copies of his letters written during the long years of travel. The approach he takes in his geography of the Safavid Empire is thus close to choices made by the cartographers and mapmakers.

INTRODUCTION

In the seventeenth century, numerous visitors from Catholic and Protestant countries in Europe came to Safavid Iran. Most were ambassadors, merchants, and missionaries. Almost all contributed bits and pieces to an increasing cultural exchange between Catholic and Protestant Europe and Safavid Iran. The European-style paintings in Isfahan in the palace of Cehel Sutun and in the Armenian church of New Julfa—as well as the lovely Safavid miniatures extant in Rome, Leiden, Paris, London, or Vienna—are wonderful witnesses to this process. The exchange was by no means limited to the arts. The *Propaganda fide* in Rome and *Missions Etrangères* in Paris sponsored the printing of religious pamphlets and brochures to support the missions as well as dictionaries and grammars to improve the missionaries' skills. Merchant families sent young boys with one of their relatives to Iran in order to learn the Oriental languages

where they were spoken, together with the secrets of the trade. Safavid shahs and their courtiers encouraged mixed Muslim-Christian sessions at the court or in public and enjoyed good debates.

The resulting manuscripts and books were widely distributed with institutional support, both in Safavid Iran and in Catholic Europe. Missionaries in Iran translated medical writings from Persian into their own languages and compiled encyclopaedic dictionaries and accounts of the country's flora and fauna, history, language, contemporary politics, religion, and culture. Several missionaries repeatedly claimed that the mathematical and astronomical-astrological education widespread among the Safavid elites induced them to exploit their own knowledge in these disciplines as a vehicle for their apostolic mission. When we look at the books produced by the missionaries and at the Safavid manuscripts on the sciences acquired by Catholic and Protestant visitors from Europe in seventeenth-century Iran, we discover, however, that mathematics and astronomy together with astrology constituted only one of the many scholarly subjects that attracted the visitors' attention and money. Geography and medicine appear to have been much greater attractions to the Europeans than the mathematical sciences. The collecting of plants and seeds served scholarly as well as commercial purposes and was thus pursued by scholars, merchants, and adventurers alike. In comparison to these activities, discussing mathematics, astronomy, and astrology was of rather little relevance and attraction. The diverse dictionaries produced in the seventeenth century support the claim that the exact sciences, contrary to the missionaries' claims, were by no means central to their exchange with Safavid nobles and scholars.

Most of the activities described above apparently took place primarily as oral communication. Written results of an exchange of scholarly knowledge are rather scant in number and quality at both ends of the cultural spectrum. This article presents an English translation of one such extant witness to the impact oriental written and oral sources had upon the collection and appropriation of knowledge of Safavid political, physical, and cultural geography. This witness is the Latin geography of Iran by the Italian nobleman and adventurer Pietro della Valle (1586-1652). It was first composed in 1624 in Goa, the capital of Portuguese India, and addressed to a Jesuit missionary, Vincislaus Pantaleone Kirwitzer (d. 1626), whose center of activities was first in China and then in the Philippines. Della Valle had met him while waiting in Goa for a ship bound to Europe. According to a letter written to his friend Mario Schipano after his return to Rome in summer 1626,

Della Valle meant the treatise to be printed, although its publication never materialized.¹ In Rome, Della Valle continued to work on this text, adding some of the latest information he had received from Iran and Georgia, polishing his Latin style and grammar, and introducing, albeit very briefly, the notion of a wider audience he wished to reach. He also substantially revised the letters he had sent from Naples to the Italian physician Mario Schipano, one of his friends and a co-member in the Accademia degli Umoristi. Because there is a close relationship between several passages in the revised letters, as published by Della Valle, and in his geography, it seems likely that the two later versions of this treatise, which Della Valle produced in 1626 and 1628 in Rome, differ substantially from the original Goan version, which is lost.

THE INNOVATIVE CHARACTER OF DELLA VALLE'S TEXT

Della Valle's geography of Iran has been described by a reviewer of this essay as offering to present-day historians no new knowledge about Safavid Iran, its neighbors, or Europe. This may be true from a purely "factual" point of view. We are not at all convinced that it is correct with regard to anthropological details mentioned by the Italian traveler. We are sure, however, it is wrong with regard to intellectual history in Europe. The issue at stake here is Della Valle's decision to describe Iran under Shah Abbas in a scholarly treatise about the country's geography. The most important aspect of his approach is the relative importance of geographical concepts and names from classical antiquity versus geographical concepts and names of local provenance. A second aspect is the relative importance of written versus oral information. A third aspect concerns the relationship between different sorts of practices used by the traveler to gain, evaluate, and order information.

Della Valle's geography of Iran thus differs markedly from earlier attempts by authors from Catholic and Protestant Europe to describe their geographical knowledge of this region. It also stands apart from others of Della Valle's own writings.

¹ "L'undici aprile, per essere il giorno del mio natale, feci di questo dì la data della lettera dedicataria nel mio trattato *De regionibus subiectis recentiori Persarum imperio*, che haueuo animo di mandare in luce." Penultimate letter to Schipano, Rome, July 11, 1626. *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle Il Pellegrino Descritti da lui medesimo in Lettere Familiari all'Erudito suo Amico Mario Schipano Divisi in Tre Parti cioè: La Turchia, la Persia e l'India colla Vita e Ritratto dell'Autore*, ed. G. Gancia (Brighton, 1843), 2:934.

Iran in geographical and cartographic sources of Catholic and Protestant Europe

Iran as Iran does not appear in geographical texts and maps made in Catholic or Protestant Europe before the early nineteenth century. In the 1820s and 1830s, a few French and some German maps name the territory of present-day Iran by this name, while English and most other maps continue to call the region Persia. Persia had been the standard name for Iran in western maps and geographical texts since the mid-sixteenth century. Before this time, the region carried no single name, but was divided according to classical authors into seven or more provinces, one of them being Persia. This classical division was reinforced when Ptolemy's *Geography* was translated into Latin at the beginning of the fifteenth century. A second name, given to Iran in western sources since the beginning of the sixteenth century, was "the kingdom of the Sophi," with Sophi being a transliteration of the Persian epithet of the new ruling dynasty (the Safavids). The first known map carrying this new name is a portolan chart made for the king of Portugal in 1519.²

Medieval maps produced in Catholic Europe that showed Iran often had nothing to say about the geographical details of the country. Portolan charts from the early fourteenth century made in Genoa and at Majorca are an exception to this rule. These charts not only show coastal towns, ports, bays, capes, and islands as most portolan charts do, but also display towns, mountains, rivers, peoples, and rulers in the interior space of the regions depicted. While most portolan charts focus on the Mediterranean Sea, parts of the Atlantic Ocean, and the Black Sea, the portolan charts from Genoa and Majorca also depict parts of the modern Middle East up to the shores of the Caspian Sea. One member of this group, the well-known Catalan Atlas, includes all Asia and hence all of Iran. This is true too for those of the world maps of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that are closely related to this group of portolan charts. Despite all differences in detail, these two groups of maps give place names for Iran too. Marco Polo's book, the reports of papal and royal envoys to the Mongol or Timurid courts, and oral information collected by Genoese and Venetian merchants who sailed on the Caspian Sea from the later thirteenth century, are most often considered the sources of the portolan charts' rather limited knowledge of Iran.³ A new, recently proposed view is that maps produced by Arabic

² Miller Atlas, Ms Paris, BNF, Cartes et Plans, Rés. GE DD 683, f 2r.

³ R.V. Tooley, Charles Bricker, and Gerald Roe Crone, eds., *Landmarks of Mapmaking: An Illustrated Survey of Maps and Mapmakers* (Amsterdam, Brussels, Lausanne, & Paris, 1968),

and Persian scholars, in particular those working at the Ilkhanid court in the second half of the thirteenth century, were more likely the fountains from which this knowledge was appropriated.⁴

A closer look at the two groups of maps indicates that maps by Iranian authors may indeed have been involved in the process of collecting local geographical knowledge about Iran, not so much for features that actually existed as for misunderstood geographical symbols. The Catalan Atlas and later portolan charts and world maps related to it show, for instance, a connection of lakes Van and Urmia to the Persian Gulf through a straight river, fed by arms springing from the two lakes. The lakes are represented by two circles of medium size, a feature common to numerous Arabic and Persian maps, in particular regional maps by Abu Zayd Ahmad b. Sahl al-Balkhi (d. 934), Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi al-Istakhri (d. 364), or Abu l-Qasim Ibn Hawqal (fl. 943-988). The river system with its main river and two branches does not reflect a set of natural objects. It was taken either from an earlier map or from a geographical text. Two main possibilities exist as to which kind of source could have been used. Regional maps of Khuzistan and Arabic Iraq are one possibility. In these maps, the two regions are separated by a borderline, which bifurcates at its northern end.⁵ The river system may represent a slightly reshaped misunderstanding of this borderline between Iraq and Khuzistan. The second possibility is Ptolemy's *Geography*, which talks of a river Eulaios to the Persian Gulf. This river has a source in Susiana and another one in Media.⁶ The familiarity of Genoese and Majorcan mapmakers and monks with either of the two sets of possible sources cannot be proven with certainty. Until now, historians of cartography have believed that Ptolemy's *Geography* came to be known to the Latin world only at the end of the fourteenth century when the Byzantine scholar Manuel

106-9; R.W. Karrow, Jr., *Mapmakers of the Sixteenth Century and Their Maps: Bio-Bibliographies of the Cartographers of Abraham Ortelius, 1570/ Based on Leo Bagrow's A. Ortelii catalogus cartographorum* (Chicago, 1993), 239.

⁴ Fuat Sezgin, "Mathematische Geographie und Kartographie im Islam und ihr Fortleben im Abendland," in *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*, 12 vols., (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 10:300-20.

⁵ H. Mžik, *Al-Istakhri und seine Landkarten im Buch "-uwar al-Aqālīm" nach der persischen Handschrift Cod. Mixt. 344 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, ed. R. Kinauer and S. Balic, (Wien, 1965).

⁶ *Claudii Ptolemaei geographia*, ed. Carolus Fridericus Augustus Nobbe (Leipzig, 1843, reprinted Hildesheim, 1990), 90. Sonja Brentjes, "Revisiting Catalan Portolan Charts: Do They Contain Elements of Asian Provenance?," in *Maps and Images: How They Have Transmitted Visual Knowledge Along the Silk Road* (Zürich, 2004), <http://www.ori.unizh.ch/maps>.

Chrysolaras brought a copy of the work to Florence. Possible familiarity with the maps of al-Balkhi, al-Istakhri, or Ibn Hawqal, from the ninth and tenth centuries, or their later copies, has not even been discussed.

On the other hand, the local place names used in the portolan charts and world maps point rather to intermediary sources from the map-makers' own cultural environment. "Marga," for instance, cannot possibly be considered a transliteration of a written form, since a transfer of all written Arabic letters of this name (Maragha) would include an *a* between the *r* and the *g*. Chesi, on the other hand, comes almost undoubtedly from Marco Polo, who spells it Chisi. In the portolan charts, Chesi is situated on the Iranian coast of Khuzistan, near Abadan. No Arabic or Persian map known to me shows a locality with a similar name in this area. The only place name that shows some similarity is Shiniz. While a misreading of the Arabic letters *n-i* into *s* is possible, it is nonetheless unlikely that Shiniz is the ancestor of Chesi, for the sound value of *ch* in Italian dialects is *k*. Chesi was placed on the coast of Khuzistan close to Abadan because Marco Polo had reported that travelers wishing to go from Baghdad to India went to Chisi and from there they sailed to India.⁷ He added that the people from Persia brought horses to Chisi, Ormus, and many other cities on the coast of the Indian Ocean in order to ship them to India for sale.⁸ These two statements, when combined, suggest that Chisi or Chesi was situated at the coast of Khuzistan close to Abadan. The place Marco Polo talked about was most likely the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the localities named in the portolan charts and world maps for Arabic Iraq are often wrongly placed, although the names are most often easily recognizable and occasionally correctly spelled. None of the slightly varying orders of placing the localities in the western maps can be found in any of the Arabic and Persian maps of this region that we are familiar with. As studies of the Dominican and Franciscan missions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries reveal, some Italian towns, in particular Pisa and Genoa, had close ties with Mongol Iran through bishops and their *fratres* who resided, starting in the late 1310s, alternatively in Maragha, Sultaniye, Tabriz, and Kirnë in the province of Nakhcivan.⁹ The missionaries had, not surprisingly, a much better understanding of

⁷ Gian Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni et Viaggi* (Venice, 1563-1606), ed. R.A. Skelton and George B. Parks, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1967), 2:6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6f.

⁹ Angelo M. Piemontese, "La via domenicana verso la 'Cronaca d'Europa' di Rašid al-Dīn," in *Turcica Et Islamica*, ed. Ugo Marazzi (Naples, 2003), 707-29, 719.

the spelling of Iranian place names like Maragha than the mapmakers, as the example "*episcopus Maragensis*" in documents of the orders indicates.¹⁰

While the sources of these portolan charts and world maps are obviously complex, the maps themselves share one feature that is important for understanding the background of Della Valle's Latin geography of Iran. In contrast to earlier medieval world maps, these maps made room for oriental local knowledge, even if it was misunderstood, misplaced, and mediated through western travelers. An opposite process took place in the fifteenth century after a Byzantine manuscript of Ptolemy's *Geography* had been brought to Florence and translated into Latin. Starting in the 1430s, portolan chart makers like Andreas Bianco in Venice added a Ptolemaic-type world map to their atlases of portolan charts.

Portolan charts of the first half of the sixteenth century overflow with classical nomenclature while retaining orientaling images of rulers and applying this kind of iconography to kings in Russia and Poland too. On the other hand, the extant copy of Fra Mauro's world map, produced in 1459 for the king of Portugal and considered the finest specimen of medieval cartography, criticizes Ptolemy and expresses its maker's belief that the geographical knowledge of the ancient astronomer was insufficient for mapping the world as known in 1459. Fra Mauro compensated for Ptolemy's deficiencies by searching for the oral knowledge of seamen and travelers like Niccolo Conti, and by drawing on knowledge from Arabic and possibly other Asian sources.¹¹ This means that Fra Mauro, who composed his complex world map shortly before Portuguese sailors circumnavigated Africa and were led by Arab pilots across the Indian Ocean, recognized, from studying books and talking to experienced travelers, the out-of-date status of ancient geographical knowledge.¹²

Moreover, the Latin manuscript tradition of Ptolemy's *Geography* indicates that interested readers and copyists of the text replaced the 27 known maps of the standard series with non-Ptolemaic maps that drew for knowledge of Asia or northern Europe on portolan charts and possibly oral information.¹³ These anonymous consumers of Ptolemy's *Geography* seem to have shared Fra Mauro's opinion. As a result, a contradictory,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 719.

¹¹ *Il Mappamondo di Fra Mauro*, ed. Tullia Gasparri Leporace (Rome, 1956).

¹² Tooley, et al., *Landmarks of Mapmaking*, 53-54.

¹³ Marica Milanese, *Tolomeo sostituito: Studi di storia delle conoscenze geografiche nel XVI secolo* (Milan, 1984).

multi-layered picture emerges in respect to what was considered appropriate to write, draw, or say about the geographical knowledge of classical authors with respect to Asia, a major part of the Old World. While it became standard after 1500 to criticize ancient geographical knowledge when discussing the New World and South or East Asia, western Asia was recast as a domain where ancient geographical knowledge was applicable and continued to carry valid meaning.

A further trend reinforced this tendency. Producers of Ptolemy's *Geography*, mapmakers, and university scholars of the sixteenth century joined in their efforts to improve the Latin translation of the Greek text made by Manuel Chrysolaras and his student Jacopo d'Angelo between 1397 and 1409, and also to modernize the classical text and its Byzantine maps. One way to approach this complex goal was the introduction of new knowledge into the world maps joined to Ptolemy's book. Another way consisted of the addition of maps of regions that did not belong to the standard series of 27 maps, such as Palestine, Scandinavia, or Lorraine. A third way was to add maps that claimed to modernize one or more of the 27 standard maps. Examples are maps of Italy, Spain, or Sclavonia. A fourth procedure was to insert annotations to Ptolemaic place names comprised of alternative classical or Biblical names, names from travel accounts, historical treatises, portolan charts, and knowledge grounded in contemporary war and politics.¹⁴ This procedure restored knowledge of the local geographical features (real or imaginary) of contemporary Islamic societies to the textual body of western geography. In a sense, the correctors and modernizers of Ptolemy's *Geography* in Germany and Italy returned to the standard of fourteenth-century Genoese and Catalan portolan charts and fifteenth-century portolan style world maps.

Efforts to modernize Ptolemaic geography climaxed with the Italian translation of Sebastian Münster's corrected edition of Ptolemy's *Geography* (translated by Pietro Andrea Mattioli) and the maps by Giacomo Gastaldi that were produced for this translation. Gastaldi transferred a series of names collected and added by Münster into the new maps he produced for regions of Africa and Asia hitherto not included into the process of modernization. He also looked for sources for collecting additional local names used in Africa and Asia in the middle of the sixteenth century.

¹⁴ Tooley, et al., *Landmarks of Mapmaking*, 55-56. Marica Milanese, "La 'Geografia' di Claudio Tolomeo nel Rinascimento," in L. Lago, *Imago mundi et Italiae: La visione del mondo e la scoperta dell'Italia nella cartografia antica (secoli X-XVI)* (Trieste, 1992), 1:93-104.

He collaborated with the secretary of the Venetian government, Giovanni Ramusio, and one of the governmental translators of Turkish, Michele Membré, in a series of shared projects, such as mural maps for the Palace of the Doge, small-sized maps for Ramusio's collection of travel accounts, world maps for the Ottoman court, the so-called Hajji Ahmet map, and a not yet identified or found map of Asia. Gastaldi created completely new maps of Asia and Africa that used Arabic, Persian, and Turkish geographical knowledge insofar as it was available in Venice. As a result, his map of Anatolia and the representation of Iran in his maps of Asia (parts one and two) come, in fact, much closer to the geographical reality of these two territories than any earlier map produced in Catholic Europe. Gastaldi's maps of Africa and Asia are accompanied, either on the maps themselves or in form of separate sheets, by long lists of names that aim at equating ancient names of places, provinces, mountains, and rivers with contemporary names. Gastaldi exploited Münster's previous work and added his newly acquired knowledge as expressed in the maps. The diversity of sources used by Münster and Gastaldi created a potpourri of names and equations, the quality and validity of which differed greatly.¹⁵

Efforts to identify and match ancient and contemporary cities with each other are recorded in much earlier western sources. Venetian diplomats visiting fifteenth-century Iran already argued for Tauris being ancient Ecbatana. Clerical travelers to the late Abbasid caliphate, like Ricoldo di Monte Croce, argued for the identity of Baghdad and ancient Babylon. The sixteenth century, however, saw the transformation of such efforts into a kind of game, which occupied western European writers on geography and history until the later years of the eighteenth century. Gastaldi was not the only producer of maps with name-lists.¹⁶ Editions of Ptolemy's *Geography* and the new kinds of atlas, such as Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, were adorned with appendices listing ancient and modern names.¹⁷ Separate dictionaries connecting modern to ancient names were compiled from the middle of the sixteenth

¹⁵ For a survey of Münster's sources, see, for instance, Tooley, et al., *Landmarks of Mapmaking*, 62.

¹⁶ *La Geografia di Claudio Ptolemeo Alessandrino: con alcuni comenti & aggiunte fatte da Sebastiano munstero a la mano, con le tauole non solamente antiche & moderne solite di starsi, ma altre nuoue aggiunte di Meser Iacopo Gastaldo Piamotese cosmographo, ridotta in volgare Italiano da M. Pietro Andrea Mattiolo Senese medico eccelletissimo* (Venice, 1548). Giacomo Gastaldi, *I Nomi Antichi E Moderni Della Seconda Parte Dell'Asia* (Venice, 1561); Giacomo Gastaldi, *I Nomi Antichi E Moderni Della Prima Parte Dell'Asia* (Venice, 1564).

¹⁷ *Descrittione di tutta Italia di F. Leandro Alberti Bolognese, nella quale si contiene il sito di essa:*

century.¹⁸ Serious disputes over who got the game right shaped the geographical discourse about the Ottoman and Safavid Empires in the later decades of the sixteenth century and were carried over into the seventeenth century. The disputes showed that there were no agreed-upon rules by which equivalency could be determined. Any argument was admissible—quotations from the Bible, ancient history books, Arabic geographies, Persian astronomical tables, accounts written by western and eastern travelers, oral information, popular etymologies, and geographical coordinates were all treated equally in principle.¹⁹ The choice of how to rate their reliability and importance was in the hands of the individual author. The disputes did not lead to a shared consensus, either on the rules or on the names and their equivalents.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, while continuing the game, travelers, missionaries, and scholars pretended that the game was old-fashioned, and that they subscribed to it merely because of habit and custom among their readers.²⁰ A deeper look suggests, however, that the rules had not changed substantially and that no new approaches had emerged for introducing more reliable criteria for deciding which modern locale was situated on top of which ancient village or town. A decisive break from the early modern rules of the game was achieved only in the first half of the eighteenth century, at least for the Greek and Anatolian parts of the Ottoman Empire, when scholars started to investigate more closely archaeological remains and tried to interpret

l'origine, & le Signorie della Città, & de i Castelli, co i nomi antichi, & moderni, i costumi de popoli, le conditioni de i paesi. Et piv gli huomini famosi, che l'hanno illustrata, i Monti, i Loghi, i Fiumi, le Fontane, i Bagni, le Mineræ; con tutte l'opere marauigliose in lei dalla Natura prodotte. Con somma diligenza corretta, & ristampata (Vinegia, 1553). Orazio Toscanella, *I nomi antichi e moderni delle provincie, regioni, città, castella [sic], monti, laghi, fiumi . . . & isole dell'Europa, dell'Africa, & dell'Asia: con le graduationi loro in lunghezza e larghezza & una breve descrizione delle suddette parti del mondo* (Venice, 1567). Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum [De Mona druidum insula antiquitati suae restituta . . . epistola . . . Humberti Lhuyd . . . Synonymia locorum geographicorum, sive antiqua regionum . . . urbium . . . nomina, recentibus eorundem nominibus explicata . . . (a Arnoldo Mylio)]*, (Antwerp, 1571). *Clavdii Ptolomæi Alexandrini . . . opus Geographiæ, nouiter castigatum & emaculatum additiõibus. raris et inuisis. necnon cum tabularum in dorso iucunda explicatiõne. . . .*, ed. Laurentius Phrisius (Strasbourg, 1522).

¹⁸ Fr. Philippo Ferrario, *Lexicon geographicum . . .*, ed. G. Dillingham. *Adnectitur tabula longitudinis ac latitudinis urbium . . . per totum terrarum orbem, ex ejusdem Philippi Ferrarii "Epitome geographica" desumpta* (London, 1657).

¹⁹ For the discussion of examples in an early seventeenth-century English travel account, see Sonja Brentjes, "Early Modern Western European Travellers in the Middle East and their Reports about the Sciences," in *Sciences, techniques et instruments dans le monde iranien (X-XI siècle)*, ed. N. Pourjavady and Ž. Vesel (Tehran, 2004), 379-420.

²⁰ *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'orient*, 10 vols., ed. L. Langlès, (Paris, 1811), 2:154-55, 330-39, et al.

ancient texts in light of these material remnants.²¹ A second turnabout accompanying this change in the rules was the resetting of the goal. Now the purpose of the game was to identify ancient names with the help of modern localities and their names.²²

Della Valle's diary, his original letters, and his geographical treatise mark an important intermediary stage in the process of creating in Catholic and Protestant Europe a body of geographical knowledge that depicted contemporary realities. The original form of his letters, before being revised for printing, shows a profoundly different procedure followed by the traveler while in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, as has been shown elsewhere.²³ Rather than following closely one of the few books he carried around with him, which was Filippo Ferrari's *Epitome Geographia*, a dictionary identifying modern places by ancient names, he preferred to collect information and to create knowledge by his own observations, questioning local people, scholars, peasants, and nomads alike, and learning the Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, or Persian names of the day. Most of his energy went into the acquisition of first-hand local knowledge, whether oral or written, and the philological skills necessary to access it. If he used books at all, it was a travel account from the sixteenth century by the French druggist Pierre Bélon. Della Valle employed Bélon both as a source of information and a chance to display his own, new knowledge contradicting the statements of the French traveler. Della Valle applied this same kind of skeptical and occasionally outright critical attitude to the geographical dictionary by his compatriot Ferrari in the few instances he referred to it. He wrote long discourses about the inappropriateness of the identification of Baghdad with Babylon and in favour of the identification of Ktesiphon with al-Mada'in on the basis of his visits there, as well as knowledge learned later from a Persian geography.

Della Valle's attempts to acquire and present geographical knowledge of Iran

Della Valle produced five different types of sources that speak of his efforts to acquire geographical knowledge of Iran and to describe this newly gained information. His diary is the document nearest to his

²¹ Patrick Jager, "Voyageurs au Levant à la recherche de l'antiquité," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 27 (1995): 89-98. *Homère en France après la Querelle (1715-1900): Actes du colloque de Grenoble (23-25 Octobre 1995)*, ed. Daniel Sangsue (Paris, 1999).

²² See Jean Baptiste Bourignon d'Anville, *Géographie ancienne abrégée* (Paris, 1768).

²³ Sonja Brentjes, "The Presence of Ancient Secular and Religious Texts in Pietro della Valle's (1586-1652) Unpublished and Printed Writings," forthcoming.

immediate acts of collecting information while traveling through the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. Closely connected to the diary are his original letters written during this travel to Mario Schipano in Naples, and to some extent also his letters written to Cardinal Crescentio Crescentis in Rome and to other friends, family members, and acquaintances in Istanbul, Naples, Rome, and Aleppo. The letters sent to Schipano were published 26 years after Della Valle returned home in 1626. During these 26 years, Della Valle studied and excerpted a substantial number of manuscripts and printed books from antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period written in Latin, Italian, French, Portuguese, Persian, Arabic, and Spanish. Works by ancient Greek authors and the occasional Hebrew sources Della Valle studied in Latin translations.

As we have shown elsewhere, Della Valle acquired geographical knowledge while traveling from three kinds of sources: oral information from native inhabitants of the territories he traveled through, a travel account by the sixteenth-century French druggist and natural historian Pierre Bélon, and manuscripts in local languages that he bought during his journey.²⁴ Della Valle's focus while acquiring this knowledge was on learning local names of towns, villages, rivers, lakes, plains, and mountains, memorizing their local spelling, and transliterating them correctly into the Latin alphabet. A second effort aimed at rectifying errors in Bélon's report. A third task Della Valle shouldered with some delight was to criticize identifications made at home of ancient towns with contemporary place names in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. A major problem for the two processes of correction and critique was the necessity to confirm the veracity of the new information and to place the verified information into the canon of knowledge familiar to Della Valle and his countrymen. Della Valle believed that written sources were necessary for verifying orally acquired knowledge. His diary and the letters to Schipano testify to the unhappiness he felt over the very few books from his own culture that he could access while traveling.²⁵ He thought to balance this shortage by buying Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manu-

²⁴ Sonja Brentjes and Volkmar Schüller, "The Safavid Court in the Seventeenth Century: A Place of Learning and Exchange of Knowledge?," unpublished manuscript 2002.

²⁵ Ms Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottoboniano latino 3382, f 150b: "... Io non ho qui Quinto Curtio per uederlo, ne altro libro da potei consultare . . ."; Ms Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto, Archivio Della Valle—del Bufalo 51, letter from Baghdad, December 18, 1616, unpaginated. Della Valle kept this passage unaltered in his printed letters, see Della Valle: *De'Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il Pellegrino*

scripts about geography and other scholarly fields.²⁶ Indeed, he bought Persian manuscripts about geography, history, and astronomy, Arabic and Turkish manuscripts on astronomy, astrology, and medicine, as well as dictionaries, poetry, and literature in all three languages.²⁷ Lacking books as means of proof, Della Valle had to find another device for handling acquired local information. Depending on whether he possessed knowledge about a region, a river, a place, or a monument learned at home, he compared the old and familiar knowledge with the new information. The printed letters do not indicate that he invented a single rule for how to handle the comparison. When it suited him, he chose the old and familiar knowledge over the new information, while on other occasions he opted for devaluing the old knowledge in favor of the new.²⁸ If he applied a yardstick at all, it was social hierarchy. Courtiers of Shah Abbas are portrayed as more reliable in their knowledge about Iran, its geography and history, than peasants or local elites.²⁹ A comparison between the diary and the original letters to Schipano and the unpublished letters to Crescenti reveals that the need for verification depended on the type of text Della Valle composed. The need for verification is rarely visible in his diary and his letters to the cardinal. It is much more prominent in his original letters to Schipano. It is overwhelmingly present in the printed version of Della Valle's letters to Schipano. Its presence is the result of the long years of study of books and manuscripts that Della Valle undertook in Rome after his return. The excerpts from his reading enabled Della Valle to revise his original account on what he did and cared for while traveling. The traveler's expressed motif was his wish to improve his account's quality to ensure his fame while alive and after his death.³⁰

In the middle between these two sets of documents stands Della Valle's geographical treatise. It evidently drew on his original letters when first written in Goa. Later in Rome, it underwent a similar process

Descritti da lui medesimo in Lettere familiari All'Erudito suo Amico Mario Schipano. Persia, Parte Prima (Rome, 1658), 357.

²⁶ Ms Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottoboniano latino 3382, ff 24a, 39a, 52a, 59b, 83a, 84a, 138a, 150b, 154b.

²⁷ See Ettore Rossi, *Elenco dei manoscritti persiani della Biblioteca Vaticana* (The Vatican, 1948).

²⁸ Pietro della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé* [sic]: *Gentilhomme Romain, Dans la Turquie, l'Égypte, la Palestine, la Perse, les Indes Orientales, & autres lieux*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1745), 2:109, 133, 188-89; 4:115-16.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 6:148.

³⁰ See the analysis in Sonja Brentjes, "The Presence of Ancient Secular and Religious Texts," forthcoming.

of revision as the letters without getting infused with the same heavy dose of classical and biblical sources. In the geographical treatise, Della Valle portrays himself as the decisive source for reliable knowledge. Local written and oral information is presented as plausible and at times even superior to what Della Valle had learned at home or what his countrymen believed.³¹ Ancient authors and the Bible are rarely explicitly mentioned, but are occasionally quoted without quotation marks. Della Valle knew what his readers could recognize as metaphors, similes, lines of verses, or other bits of shared education and belief. The combination of common, familiar knowledge with the explicit self-presentation as the owner of reliable, but foreign, knowledge is Della Valle's central strategy in the geography of Iran for ensuring the credibility of the new knowledge he offered.

The different status of the three types of documents within Della Valle's career as a traveler and writer lies at the heart of his different approaches to the portrayal of Iran's geography and history. Della Valle's original letters to Schipano and, to a lesser extent, his letters to Crescenti are filled with information about local geography. In the case of his letters to Schipano, this information is visually highlighted as oriental knowledge acquired by the traveler through witnesses and written sources. The traveler assured his addressee of his continuous efforts at improving the quality of such knowledge by studying local languages, buying local manuscripts, talking to local scholars and nobles, and undertaking excursions to verify that the local information that contradicted beliefs at home was indeed correct. Knowledge from classical sources played almost no role in the diary or in the original letters. Given that such knowledge permeated Della Valle's education as a member of the Roman nobility, the repeated reference to a shortage of books can only be seen as a stratagem. The traveler could have used Filippo Ferrari's *Epitome geographia* given to him by Schipano in order to place new information into the framework of classical and early modern knowledge available at home. That he referred to Ferrari's geographical dictionary less than ten times in his original letters, while doing so more than twenty times in the printed version, affirms his lack of interest in such a bookish practice of gathering knowledge while traveling.

The printed letters show a remarkable unevenness in their treatment of geography and history in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. Filled

³¹ See the translation below.

with hundreds of quotes from ancient secular and sacred books, they transform the seventeenth-century Middle East into a pre-Islamic cultural domain described from a Hellenistic and Christianized perspective. Below this level, the contemporary physical and cultural geography of the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire and the western and central regions of Safavid Iran are visible in the languages of the courtly elites and merchants. In the process of revising his original letters to Schipano, Della Valle tried to do what he had mostly avoided while traveling. He sought to identify modern places, mountains, rivers, and ancient ruins with names long lost, but preserved in ancient writings.

Della Valle's Latin geography of Safavid Iran represents a synthesis between the procedure followed while traveling and expressed so proudly in his original letters and the re-alignment of modern oriental geographical reality to ancient knowledge and perception through the study of books expressed so loudly in the printed letters. In marked contrast to the printed letters and most of the printed travel accounts of the seventeenth century, Della Valle's Latin geography of Iran does not coat an Oriental foundation with a classical perspective, but presents both forms of geographical reality and depiction as of equal importance; the meaning and relationship of both has to be explored by means of philology, sources from all three cultural realms (the ancient one, the Oriental one, and the early modern western one), and oral local information. Mathematical and astronomical criteria, although praised in Della Valle's printed letters and applied in his own observational practice, both while traveling and later at home, are of minor relevance in his Latin geography of Iran. This treatise, written for a fellow-traveler in the East, may well have taken this form because a fellow-traveler had to cope with the non-familiar landscapes and cultures of Asia as did Della Valle himself, rather than sitting at home, expecting to read about foreign lands in familiar terms. The repeated revision of the text in order to prepare it for publication in Italy, the insistence on Persian, Arabic, and Turkish vocabulary, and the lack of explicit references to ancient books and authors indicate, however, that Della Valle had intentionally kept a structure that invited the Italian reader at home too to recognize Oriental (written and oral) depictions of Iran's cultural and physical geography as of equal standing with ancient texts. With this decision, he broke from the humanist preference for ancient knowledge over oriental knowledge and re-introduced, through the medium of the traveler's individually gained knowledge, the scholarly relevance of oriental sources for western writings about Iran.

Della Valle's return to humanist literary practice in the printed versions of his letters to Schipano invites us to read other printed travel accounts of the period as equally grounded in a literary tradition rather than as the expression of the travelers' practices of gathering new knowledge while traveling. Della Valle's Latin geography of Iran affirms that less stifling approaches to describing new knowledge about Islamic countries were possible in the seventeenth century. This contradiction raises the question as to what motivated the travelers to adopt the literary fiction created by applying ancient Greek and Latin geographical concepts and names to early modern Islamic countries when they turned into authors who planned to print their accounts. Travelers turned into authors had to face the knowledge available to their compatriots. Those who employed ghost-writers or worked with editors—like André Thevet in the sixteenth century or Jean-Baptist Tavernier and Jean Chardin in the seventeenth century—had to cope with what these ghost-writers or editors knew, understood, and accepted.³² Those travelers who acted as ghost-writers, like Adam Olearius, could impose their own views about what a good travel account should look like upon their fellow-travelers. Censorship was a third element that needed to be accommodated. Many travelers who wished to publish their accounts wrote for a well-defined audience. Pilgrims to Jerusalem and other places in the Ottoman Empire described their travel most often in the framework of earlier books on pilgrimage. The contemporary realities of the Ottoman Empire did not matter in such a framework and appeared merely to mark the beginning and the end of the journey, as well as the real and imagined hardships suffered during it. Young men traveling in the entourage of an ambassador—or extending their so-called grand tour through Catholic and Protestant countries of Europe to the territories of the Ottoman Empire—wished to show off the fruits of their learning while traveling and their piety while following the stations of the pilgrimage route. For them, classical authors and the Bible proved indispensable tools for presenting themselves as refined and well educated travelers. Scholars visited the Ottoman Empire because they wished to gather information about new commercial commodities, in particular drugs, plants, and animals, to collect sources and objects of knowledge (manuscripts, coins, seeds, animals, etc.), to free ancient knowl-

³² See, for instance, Frank Lestringant, *André Thevet, cosmographe des derniers Valois* (Geneva, 1991), as well as Langlès's preface and notes to his edition of Chardin's account, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin*, 1:xvj-xvii, xxxvj, et al.

edge from its vernacular impurities by comparing their books with oriental nature, and to restore ancient knowledge to its fullest by acquiring translations of classical texts into Arabic from Oriental libraries and booksellers. When they published accounts of their travels, they did not always use the humanist style of writing about knowledge, but occasionally made more room for Oriental knowledge. Those who adopted the humanist style often did so because their predecessors had chosen this style. Borrowing heavily from successful travel accounts was a commercially viable strategy. It was also considered good scholarly behavior. Others, finally, were narrow-minded bigots who could not and would not find a single good hair on the foreign bear. As a result, a multi-layered image of the early modern Islamic world in Northern Africa and western Asia was created, one that colonized these regions intellectually, deprived them of their own linkage to classical antiquity, and denied their peoples and rulers the right to belong to the same geographical spaces as the writers of the accounts and their readers.

DELLA VALLE'S LATIN STYLE AND GRAMMAR

In his introductory phrases, Pietro della Valle described his treatise for Father Vincislaus as a small work which he had already written some years ago, but which he intended to send to him now in a revised and enlarged form. Hence, his geography of Safavid Iran was not a text written spontaneously, but a well-considered, carefully formulated treatise which evolved through several revisions, perhaps from earlier notes written spontaneously. This process of repeated revision could not but have a clear impact on the chosen wording and style. Whereas in spontaneously written notes, the style of the language is very much like the style of spoken language, the language in a carefully worked out treatise will usually be much more complicated. In the spoken language, the sentences are not very long, the syntactic constructions are not too complicated, and the vocabulary mainly consists of frequently used words whose sense is easily recognizable. The author of a carefully planned treatise will choose his wording much more consciously. Which style of language an author favors depends on many circumstances. As a rule, s/he will decide in favor of a style s/he can assume is well understood by the reader. One basic aim of writing is to make the content and the message of a text accessible to the reader. Many authors often choose, however, a style that indicates that they are learned and educated men or women. Such a choice is often accompanied by a lack of attention to whether

the formulations in their text are clear and unambiguous. Pietro della Valle was one such author.

A treatise is a well formulated text when its statements can be understood completely and unequivocally by the reader. Unfortunately, Pietro della Valle violated this principle repeatedly. In translating the Latin text, we frequently wondered whether the original reader of this treatise could truly understand the content of a phrase as meant by Pietro della Valle, even if one grants the reader a thorough knowledge of (classical or early modern) Latin and its stylistics. By formulating long and difficult Latin sentences, Della Valle obviously endeavored to give his treatise the appearance of a classical Latin text. Even if early modern scholars actively spoke Latin, it was no longer spoken as a living language. Educated native speakers form their sentences as a rule instinctively and choose the right grammatical construction automatically. If the language is, however, only spoken as a scholarly language, the grammatical constructions and connections in longer and more complicated sentences tend to be increasingly incorrect. This is particularly true if an author did not truly master Latin grammar. Such a deviation from classical Latin grammar makes the understanding of a text more difficult. Because Della Valle often ignored the rules of classical Latin, understanding his text was not easy. In several cases, we could understand passages only by checking the translation with the help of other sources, for example historical encyclopaedias and dictionaries. Therefore we admit frankly that there are some passages in the translation which we are not quite sure we have understood correctly.

Della Valle loved to embellish his text with short phrases and expressions that he borrowed almost literally from Virgil, and to which we refer at the corresponding places in the translation. In the early modern period, any person educated in the Latin language knew Virgil's poetry. This does not mean necessarily that many authors chose to insert the poet's words without attribution in order to improve the quality of their own texts. Quoting from Virgil in this way served to impress the reader with the author's reading, if not his good style. In those days too, such poetic formulations in scientific texts or reports may have appeared to the readers as stilted and ornate. In addition to Della Valle's implicit quotations from Virgil, there are certainly further expressions and short phrases in Della Valle's treatise taken over from other famous Latin authors that we were unable to identify.

In 1628, when Della Valle wrote his last revision of the text, Vincislaus Kirwitzer had been dead for two years. Hence, he never saw the final

version of Della Valle's geography of Iran and could not judge for himself the traveler's efforts to improve his very first draft composed while in Goa.

TRANSLATION³³

On the regions which are subjected to the present empire of the Persians

Pietro della Valle, the pilgrim, warmly salutes the Honorable Father Vincislaus Pantaleone of the Society of Jesus

This is a small work about the regions subjected in our time to the Persian Empire. I wrote it four years ago in Goa following your wish, and I now send it from Rome for you to read in the farthest corner of China, where you are living now: I would have loved to present this small gift a long time ago, but I hope that it will not be unwelcome now, because of the material that has been added.

One addition you will meet as the preface. Two others are added as appendices. The preface explains how certain proper names (places, ranks, and men) that appear here should be pronounced in Latin. I mean not the ancient pronunciation, which has been completely abandoned, but in our own Latin, i.e. in that proper to the people who now dwell in Latium. Though the peoples of Europe all use Latin letters in writing, they do not pronounce certain of the

³³ The last version, obviously prepared for publication, is contained in Ms Bibliotheca Estense di Modena, Modena, γ.S.1.10 (Fondo Campori 698) (hereafter Ms Modena γ.S.1.10). An earlier version can be found in Ms Bibliotheca Estense di Modena, Modena γ.U.1.22 (Fondo Campori 699) (hereafter Ms Modena γ.U.1.22), but it is barely legible.

Remark: The edited Latin text of Della Valle was based exclusively on the latest manuscript compiled by him in 1628. The editor, Enzo Gamalero, did not prepare an apparatus, nor did he say that there was an earlier manuscript available in the same library. His edition contains several errors, ignores all the Persian glosses compiled by Della Valle with much care, and neglects a few of Della Valle's additions, changes, and notes. These omissions have been corrected wherever necessary. We indicate in our translation only such changes of the edition that are wrong or alter the meaning of the edited text. As to what concerns the translation, we have tried to follow in a first translation the edited text as closely as possible, but chose to deviate wherever necessary due to Della Valle's cumbersome style. Such deviations include the introduction, not specifically marked of full stops and other punctuation. They also include adding, replacing, or omitting words. These are not marked, unless substantial. The result was a text that was difficult to read and hence more or less inaccessible to the modern reader. That is why we gratefully accepted James Tracy's generous offer to edit our English text. As a result, the text below is strictly speaking not a translation, but a modernized rendition of the content of Della Valle's geographical treatise. Substantial changes we carried over from the manuscript used by Gamalero for the edition are pointed out in footnotes. We preserved Della Valle's historical orthography of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish words as well as the royal title of his own culture, i.e. king, for the Safavid title *shah* and the Ottoman title *sultan*.

letters in the same way; rather, each nation pronounces them in its own manner. That is why I felt it necessary to explain this to you, a man of Austrian origin, and to other readers. Pronunciation will be marked by accents in the style of the Greeks, as is the rule in lists of words in (foreign) languages (made) by travelers. This way, one will know on which syllable the accent rises or falls. This (method) shows best how an expression should be pronounced in a correct und unadulterated way. Furthermore, as one can see, I have placed these words in the margin (where) they are not only written in Latin, but with the correct Persian signs too, so that there will be no doubt about the proper pronunciation of Persian speech.

The first appendix I have added deals with Baghdad.

The city of Baghdad, with the entire adjacent region of Babylon which was occupied by Abbàs, king of the Persians, and added to his kingdom about the time I was writing this text in India, or a few months earlier. The Turks have thus far not been able to recover it, despite having created huge armies in recent years, and exerting all their force toward this objective. We were informed of this matter, i.e. the subjugation of Babylon by the Persians, in May 1624 shortly after you had left town. <It is thus no wonder that our text describes this region as subjugated to the Turks, for such had been the case previously.>³⁴

The other point I wish to add is that the noble heroine Ketevan Dedupali, the mother of Teimuraz, one of the Georgian princes, who will be mentioned twice honorably in this small work, and about whom we have often spoken, has finally (crowned) the exalted deeds of (her) previous life with the most glorious martyrdom, after she patiently suffered great tortures with admirable perseverance until the very last gasp. (This happened) in the same city of Sciraz where she has been detained already for a long time, in hopes of inducing her to renounce her belief in Jesus Christ.³⁵ I do not know why, but the king of the Persians finally ordered the prefect of this province to subject her to compulsion.³⁶

³⁴ Ms Modena γ.S.1.10, f 3a, 11-14.

³⁵ Ketevan was killed September 12, 1624. Nodar Assatiani and Alexandre Bendianachvili, *Histoire de la Géorgie* (Paris & Montréal, 1997), 188.

³⁶ Della Valle tends to ignore the larger political and military contexts of the imprisonments of the various Georgian hostages. Before he came to Iran, during his stay there, and after he had left, the war between the Safavids, Ottomans, and various Georgian factions concerning who would rule the Caucasus went on almost incessantly. According to Assatiani and Bendianachvili, Abbas ordered Ketevan's conversion in order to humiliate his Kakhetian enemies and to weaken their resistance. Assatiani and Bendianachvili, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 188. Kalistrat Salia believes that her death in 1624 was caused by Abbas's uncontrollable temper after Teimuraz and his ally Saakadze had again escaped annihilation. Kalistrat Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, ed. Nino Salia (Paris, 1983), 298. All three writers take an explicitly nationalistic stance. Their common source was probably the eighteenth-century Georgian historical chronicle of Wakhucht, published in 1856 by M. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIX^e siècle: Traduite du Géorgien* (St. Petersburg, 1856), 2:166. Torturing and killing captured enemies and send-

More I do not have to add. Good-bye: please inform me about the affairs of the Chinese and about the spread of the Christian faith in that very far region of the east and remember us in your prayers to God.

Rome, the place of my birth, the third day after the Ides of April 1628.³⁷

The region of Babylon, together with some of the adjacent territories, still called by its ancient name in the Holy Scriptures, is called by the contemporary Persians Araq. The meaning of this name is sweat, first, because the heat in these areas is most excessive during summer time. Perhaps too because these areas are made fertile not only by cutting irrigation ditches from the rivers, but also by much sweat, after they have been completely soaked by a few rain-falls. But Araq has two meanings, i.e. Araq of Arabia and Araq of Agiamia. Those regions subject to the power of the Persians are called Agiam, or Agem. Araq of Arabia refers to Babylonia and the adjacent areas, presently subject to the empire of the Turks. If you turn towards the east, you travel from Araq through the high rising mountains of the region of Kurdistan. These run from north to south, with the Taurus Mountains as a kind of branch, and divide the Persian Empire from the Turkish Empire. Araq of Agiamia is thus the first region under Persian control, and includes the province of Hamadan, whose capital is the city of the same name. This province is, I assume, part of ancient Persia or Susiana in the borders set by the Medes.

Hamadan is a city half way between Baghdad, the royal seat of Babylonia in earlier times, and Sphahanum or Ispahan, which has recently become the magnificent seat of the entire Persian monarchy. There, namely in Hamadan, the tombs of Esther and Mardochei are preserved until this day. Many Jews from neighboring places and from all over come there to pay their respects at the tombs. Sphahanum, a city also in the region of Araq, has a latitude of approximately 32 degrees. When one travels from there toward the middle between Arcturus and west, as I believe, i.e. toward the northwest, one comes to the cities of Kascian, Qom, Qazvin, Abher, Sultania, and Zengian, still in the region of Araq. Zengian is the borderpoint of the regions of Araq and Adherbaigian.³⁸ At the end of this treatise I give the height of the pole for these and some other cities, according to the results of various observers of my time, who determined them in different ways and whose opinions often differ.

ing their heads to allies as proofs of success were standard practices among the Georgians, as well as the Ottomans. The same applies to killing prisoners who had lost their value, or who proved to be an obstacle to a new political endeavor.

³⁷ April 16, 1628.

³⁸ "... et Zengian ultra quam terminus erat Araq regionis et Adherbaigian." Pietro della Valle, "De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus," ed. Enzo Gamalero, *Studi Iranici* 17 (1977): 287-303, here 288. In the manuscript, the explanation added to Zengian is put between commas. In his letters to Schipano, Della Valle identified Sultaniyya as the place where the province of Iraq terminates and Azarbayjan begins. Pietro della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé [sic]: Gentilhomme Romain, Dans la Turquie, l'Égypte, la Palestine, la Perse, les Indes Orientales, & autres lieux*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1745), 4:115.

It will suffice to state that, at least in my view, the region Araç of Agiamia borders in the east on Chorasàn; in the west on Araç of Arabia; in the north partly on Mazanderan and the other provinces located on the (south shore of the) Hircanian (Caspian) Sea, and, farther west, as the Sea curves, on Adherbaigian; finally, in the south it borders on Persia proper, the greatest and most excellent part of which is today called Fars or Farsistan.

Adherbaigian, a name that means worshippers of the fire, is doubtless the Media of the ancients or, as I prefer to say, its greatest and most excellent part. The region is mountainous. If one follows the upper road leading north-west, one crosses first a river of remarkable size which flows into the Caspian Sea. This river is called now in Persian Sepid-rud, i.e. the white river. But in Turkish it is commonly called Qizil-uzen, i.e. water that runs blackberry-red or golden-colored. What river this may be according to the ancients, I cannot easily discover.³⁹ Besides many other places barely worth mentioning, this region has two important cities. To the east lies Ardebil, the termination of my peregrination in this area. There one finds the sanctuary of the Persians and the mausoleum of the kings who reign today in Persia, owing to a man who stood out among their greatest, and was famous among the population through the legend of (his) pious life, even though he was not himself a king. He was everywhere called Sciah Sofi, which can mean either "chosen and upright king" or "pious king." Whether he was so called due to his faith and the dignity of his descent, or because this was his proper name, I do not know. They also call him "the ancestor of the kings reigning today." He who is buried in Ardebil was at least the outstanding restorer of the Shi'ite sect in Agiamia, if not its first founder.⁴⁰

Situated more toward the west (in Adherbaigian), and almost on the same parallel, is Tebriz, once a royal seat; it is known to the heavens above, for during the repeated wars between the Persians and the Turks it was often devastated, captured, or besieged by one side or the other.⁴¹ The remaining cities of Adherbaigiàn I pass over with silence since I have not seen them myself.⁴² There is so much the region of Adherbaigian borders on: in the east the larger part of Araç of Agiamia, in the west, towards the north, Armenia, part of which is now included in the Persian Empire, bounded by the Turks. In the

³⁹ According to H.L. Rabino di Borgomale, the ancient name of the river was Mardus. It originates in Kurdistan where it is called Qizil-uzen. Its name in Gilan is Sefid-rûd. H.L. Rabino di Borgomale, *Les Provinces Caspiennes de la Perse* (Paris, 1917), 46-47.

⁴⁰ This is false on both points.

⁴¹ In Virgil's *Aeneid*, I:379: "... fama super aethera notus"; Della Valle, "De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus," 289: "... iisdem de causis fama super aethera nota." We follow the English translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* by H. Rushton Fairclough: *Eclagues, Georgics, Aeneid I-IV* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1953), 267.

⁴² Although this phrase seems to suggest that Della Valle had seen Tabriz, this is not the case, as he states clearly in his letters to Schipano. Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:73.

north it is bounded by Ghilàn and other more northern parts of ancient Media at the Caspian Sea, there where once dwelled Caddusians, Mardians, and the like; in the south, if I am not mistaken, it is bounded by parts of Araq.

I wish to speak less about Armenia than possible, because I have visited this region too little. It suffices to mention the better known cities: Nachcivàn and Irovàn, which have been attacked in recent years by the Turks, albeit without success. The small but densely populated province of Alingià is a neighbor to the city of Nachcivàn. Its inhabitants, though speaking Armenian, adhere to the Roman-Catholic faith. Several of them perform the service. They have a number of small churches that are cared for by the brethren of the Dominican order who live under (the guidance of) an archbishop of the same nation and constitution. (The archbishop) is usually ordained in Rome.⁴³ But (their number) decreases day by day. They do not receive assistance from Europe. Little by little, crude and countless errors creep into the faith among them, because of ignorance since they are illiterate and have no scholars. Nonetheless I hope that in future the spiritual needs of these Armenians and all the other Christians, wherever they may be in the world, will be taken care much better, by the work of the exalted congregation (De Propaganda Fide) established in recent years by the cardinals and other pious folk, under papal supervision, and which works seriously for the spread of the faith.

While the great difference in language also causes difficulty, it is particularly disruptive that those who were sent here from Rome a few times to teach them do not stay long, because they hate entirely the rude way of life of the Armenians (as I myself have seen occasionally). On the other hand, those pious Armenians do not easily bear the far more delicate mores and the more exact teaching of our fathers.

Under the jurisdiction of Irovan is Three-Churches, the highest patriarchate and sanctuary of all Armenians.⁴⁴ It was built in olden times not far away from a mountain on which—as one believes—Noah's ark was stranded. The altar stone of the larger of these churches was cut from the place where Noah after the deluge was ordered to offer the first sacrifice to Deus Optimus Maximus. They say that these things were told in a dream to Saint George, the apostle of the Armenians (they call him Lusavereius, that is, the illuminator, because he enlightened the people here with the light of the Gospel long ago).

After many of the Armenians had been joined by war to the empire of the Persians, King Abbàs, who rules today, ordered this stone to be brought into the interior of the kingdom for greater security. Together with relics of the saints which were in the possession of the Armenians, he had the stone brought to Sphahan, promising that he will erect there, for pious keeping of the stone, three other churches similar to the old ones. His hope was to prevent the

⁴³ Compare to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:127.

⁴⁴ Della Valle talks here of Etchmiadzin.

Armenians from returning to their homeland, out of love and veneration for the stone. While no church has yet been built under the name of Three-Churches, many others have been built. The aforementioned stone, together with the other relics, is preserved in the city of the Armenians called New-Ciolfa. This is one of four cities that form the beautiful Sphahanum, the tetrapolis. They are separated from each other by a very narrow space; the river Zende-rud forms a natural boundary running from sunset to sunrise, while the lovely Cehar Bagh street runs from north to south. The river and the street cross at the bridge, very artfully constructed across the river. In addition to the cities of Armenia already mentioned, Old-Ciolfa was memorable for being at all times rich in commodities. Its inhabitants traveled throughout the world for profitable trade, just as the Genoese did in the dominions of the Catholic King. They were the founders of the new Ciolfa which, as I have said, has been joined to Sphahan.

Among the cities of Armenia beyond the Araxes, Van is famous in the nation of Agiamia. Others, under the power of the Turks, are also famous; but with these I have no business, because my aim is to describe the regions of the Persian empire, bounded by the Araxes. Of these regions, the one situated in the direction towards Armenia is very fertile, rich in all that is good, easily the best under Persian rule, were it not for its close proximity to the foe. For to Persia's west lie Assyria and other regions subjugated by the Turks, who are always hostile towards the Persians. To the north are the Georgians, a Christian people, who have also been hostile to the Persians in recent times. Thus while Armenia was easy to invade, it has been difficult to protect. King Abbas, prudent and calculating, thought it best to rule safely over a people without land than to abandon country and people to the danger of invasion by the foe.⁴⁵ Thus the cities of Armenia joined to his empire were depopulated almost completely, by the dislocation mentioned above. That is why Old-Ciolfa and Nachcivân are completely destroyed and have become hiding places for robbers and wild beasts.

Irovan, though it is the residence of a *chan* (that is, governor and military commander of the region), is less populous than before. Nonetheless, the fertile soil here supports towns and villages and other settlements, as well as isolated peasant houses. We can add to them the city of Ghiengé, which is not unknown, and owes its wealth to the silk trade. Teflis, a city said to lie either in Armenia or in Iberia on the borders of Armenia, was once the residence of one of the Christian princes of the Georgians called Luarsâb. His grandfather

⁴⁵ Savory explained the forced dislocation of the Armenian inhabitants of Julfa in 1604 due to the commercial and economic interests of the shah and his entourage. In exchange, the Armenians received major privileges, among them the distribution of funds from the court for building St Joseph's cathedral in New Julfa, religious freedom, a form of self-government, and interest-free loans. Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge, 1980), 174-75.

was that famous Simon who is mentioned often in our history-books.⁴⁶ But in later years, when this prince's good fortune began to wane, while still at the height of his power he surrendered on his own initiative to the King of Persia, though without his wife and children; the necessity of war made him do this.⁴⁷ After being kept prisoner for several years, he died in my time, murdered in prison.⁴⁸ His territory the Persians made into a province ruled by another prince, undoubtedly of the same family, but a Muhammedan; he governs no longer as a supreme ruler, but as one subordinate to the king of the Persians.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Compare to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 5:142. Simon and Luarsab (1592-1622) ruled the kingdom of Kartli. After being defeated by an Ottoman army, Simon was brought to Istanbul where he died in prison. Luarsab, fighting against Shah Abbas, was taken prisoner and died in a fortress in Shiraz. See Assatiani and Bendianachvili, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 183-84 and Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, 283.

⁴⁷ In his letters to Schipano, Della Valle gave an almost identical description of Luarsab's place of origin, voluntary surrender to Shah Abbas, imprisonment, and later strangulation. In this report, he said more clearly than in his geographical treatise that Luarsab had neither wife nor children. See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 6:19. However, according to Assatiani and Bendianachvili (183-84) and Salia (283), Della Valle erred with regard to Luarsab's family, as well as with regard to his voluntary surrender. The common source of the two modern histories of Georgia again may have been Wakhucht's historical chronicle from the eighteenth century, which claims that Luarsab had been lured by Shah Abbas into leaving his exile in Imereti, accompanying him to Iran, and then putting him into prison since he did not agree to convert to Islam. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 50-51.

⁴⁸ Luarsab was strangled by a bowstring in 1622, the result of a series of political and military events in Kartli and Isfahan. He had fallen into the shah's hands in 1615 and was held as a royal hostage for a long time in Astarabad. Muslim Georgians from Kartli, as well as the tsar, interceded on Luarsab's behalf. This pressure made Shah Abbas insist upon Luarsab's religious conversion for securing his submission; this, however, the prince declined. Therefore, he was brought to Shiraz in Southern Iran. Nonetheless, ongoing anti-Persian activities in the subjugated region of Kartli were ascribed to Luarsab's intrigues against Abbas. Parallel to the events in Kartli, a conspiracy against Abbas was discovered in Isfahan involving a number of Georgians. In this situation, Abbas considered it appropriate to kill Luarsab. See Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, 286, 288, 292. Compare also to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:74. In a later letter, Della Valle named Luarsab's successor Simon Chan, son of Bagred Mirza. *Ibid.*, 4:20. For the administrative and political structure of the Georgian kingdoms conquered by Abbas, see Klaus Michael Röhrborn, *Provinzen und Zentralgewalt Persiens im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1966), 4-5, 75-78.

⁴⁹ Della Valle's earlier (1626) statement adds: depending on him (i.e., on the Persian shah): ". . . nec amplius absoluto, sed tanquam Persarum Regi subdito, ab eo dependente gubernatur." Ms Modena γ.S.1.10, f 8b, 14. In 1615, Abbas appointed Bagrat as governor of Kartli. When he died in 1619, his son Simon followed him as governor. The situation was, however, very troubled, and both governors were rather unsuccessful in subduing Kartli. Simon turned to Abbas for help and was sent in 1620 with a counselor, Giorgi Saakadze, and a huge army back to his province. Saakadze had changed sides in an earlier war between Abbas and Kartli and was appreciated as an ally by Abbas. Now he again changed sides and led, together with Teimuraz, the Georgian troops fighting against the Persians in the battle of Martqopi, which the Persians lost. Teimuraz was proclaimed king of Kakheti and Kartli. Abbas sent a fresh, larger army,

This province is bordered in the east by another territory of the Georgians called Kacheti, oriented towards Iberia or Albania, and governed by Teimuráz. This prince has now fled to the Turks and is still alive, but neither he nor the Persians govern. After this great rebellion in which many Georgian nobles were killed, the prince had opened to the Persians this prosperous and naturally fortified region. Since he could not hope to maintain permanent control of the region, King Abbàs led away almost all of the inhabitants as prisoners, to the interior of his empire. At the same time, two small children, sons of prince Teimuraz, as well as his mother called Ketevàn, whom they give the title Dedupali, that is, queen, were sent to the king himself, though this did not win him over.⁵⁰ The mother of Teimuraz, exceedingly constant in Christian piety, is now guarded as a hostage, but treated honorably in the city of Sciráz. But the youths have been inducted into Muhammedan rites, not, according to rumor, according to their own wishes. They have been turned—oh, hideous crime—into eunuchs, far from their grandmother's face, lest the hope of progeny nourish in them any thought of restoring their family's former state.⁵¹ After

which defeated the Georgians in the battle of Marabda and reestablished Simon as the khan of Kartli. In 1625, Teimuraz and Saakadze returned for organizing a new insurrection. Saakadze became the de-facto ruler of Kartli, which displeased Teimuraz. As a result, a deep conflict evolved, and Teimuraz and Saakadze started fighting against each other rather than against the Safavids. Saakadze lost the battle despite his turning for help to the Ottomans, who beheaded him in 1629. Teimuraz ruled for the next six years over Kakheti and a part of Kartli, the remaining part being under Simon's rule until 1629 when Abbas died. Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, 291-93, 297-98, 300-1. See too, Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 5:142-43.

⁵⁰ Della Valle summarized in this paragraph events that took place between 1613 and 1624; he did not always respect the order of the events. In late 1613, Teimuraz sent first his mother and elder son as hostages to Abbas upon the shah's demand and under the pressure of the Kakhetian nobles, and upon a second demand his younger son plus children of the nobles too. Thereafter, Abbas demanded that Teimuraz come to him in person, but Teimuraz refused to obey and tried to fight the Persian army. He lost the war and fled first to Kartli and then to Imereti. Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, 284. Moreover, Abbas's demand for sending Teimuraz's mother as a hostage not only reflected the then standard procedure of securing compliance of an enemy, but responded too to her role as leader of the anti-Safavid rebellion against the Safavid protégé Constantin from 1605. Assatiani and Bendianachvili, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, 185.

⁵¹ The two children were castrated in 1620. In his letters to Schipano, Della Valle commented repeatedly on the shah's purpose for castrating the two boys; once, for instance, in 1618, although at that time, the two boys were not yet mutilated: "... ed i figliuoli, che erano piccoli, gli hanno fatti maomettani, e, se è vero quel che si dice, anche eunuchi, acciocchè non pensino più a successione di stati." Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle Il Pellegrino Descritti da lui medesimo in Lettere Familiari all'Erudito suo Amico Mario Schipano Divisi in Tre Parti cioè: La Turchia, la Persia e l'India colla Vita e Ritratto dell'Autore*, ed. G. Gancia (Brighton, 1843), 1:663. The origin of Della Valle's premature report about the castration is his dependence upon hearsay, as he implied in this letter and confirmed in a letter written in 1622. See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 5:143. In this later letter, Della Valle reshaped the explanation about the castration into an act of *raison d'état*, of a kind of political generosity—in essence, in lieu of taking their

Teimuraz was attacked unexpectedly, he and a few other Georgians fled into neighboring Christian territories also ruled by Georgian princes. The once fortunate region of Kacheti, destroyed and devastated, was subjected to the incursions of the Lexghi, the Georgians, and the Persians; a fertile land thus lies uncultivated.⁵²

Bordering this region and Armenia, more to the east and somewhat north of Armenia, I believe, lies the region of Scervàn, near by the Caspian Sea, thought by some to be the ancient Atropatene. Its capital is the city of Sciumachi. Not far away from it there are two cities on the west coast of the Caspian Sea; I believe they belong to Albania. One of them is Bah Kuia, famous for its white, public oil-well. It is also called, as some prefer, by the Persian name Vahcuh, that is, the open mountain. Since the sea seems to enter here the interior of a very high mountain, despite the wall that surrounds the port, the image was formed of a mountain somehow lying open. The other city is Derbend. This name means in Persian something like the hasp of a door, although the Latins call it the Caspian, Caucasian or Iron Doors.⁵³ But the confusion among writers with regard to the position as well as the name of this city has created a certain lack of clarity; hence it seems not inappropriate to present here what I have discovered in the books of oriental authors. The Latins have thoroughly confused three names of the city, so that it is not easy to differentiate which cities the ancients named Porta<e> Ferrea<e>, Porta<e> Caspia<e>, and Porta<e> Caucasia<e>.⁵⁴ What we speak of as Derbend the

lives and for protection against future suspicions. In contrast to Della Valle, Salia considers this deed to have been an act of vengeance committed in "an access of impotent rage" against Teimuraz for his continuous fight against Abbas and, in particular, for his role in the abortive Ottoman-Safavid war from 1618. Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, 291-92. This interpretation seems to be, however, not very likely since two years had passed between the two acts and no state of rage, however intense it may have been, could have lasted for two years. Della Valle's interpretation does not seem very likely either since Abbas did not so much act in order to prevent future events, but in order to suppress present insurrections, punish his adversaries, and further his immediate political aims.

⁵² This phrase apparently refers at the same time to the war of 1613-14 and to the war of 1615-16. It was after the first war that Teimuraz and a few of his adherents fled to Kartli and then to Imereti. At best, this attack of Abbas can be dubbed "unsuspected" because the war in the Caucasus Mountains was part of the Ottoman-Safavid fight for supremacy, and in 1612 a peace treaty had been signed between the two sides after almost ten years of battles, skirmishes, invasions, and expulsions. The destruction and depopulation of Kakheti, however, took place only in the second war. The shah divided the province of Kakheti into two parts. The eastern part was now ruled by Peikar, the khan of Ganja, and the western part by Bagrat, khan of Kartli (appointed to this position in 1615). Peikar brought Turcoman and Tatar nomads into his new dominion as a means to secure the area for the Safavids. Lezghians from Daghestan also moved into Kakheti and settled in a number of abandoned villages. See Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, 283-84, 290-91.

⁵³ Ms Modena γ.S.1.10, f 10a, 5.

⁵⁴ Ms Modena γ.S.1.10, f 10a, 13.

Turks call in their language *Demir-capî*, influenced, I think, by the similarity of the word "door." This means undoubtedly *Porta Ferrea*, a fact that perhaps caused the confusion among our contemporaries. But the Arab and the Persian geographers, without doubt more learned than the Turks, differentiate the one clearly from the other. The city the Persians call *Derbend* the Arabs call *Bab elabvâb*, that is, door of the doors. This is completely different from *Porta Ferrea*, which the Arabs call *Bab elhadid*, and the Persians *Der Ahanin*. They situate it far from *Derbend*, and indeed east of the Caspian Sea, namely, more than 26 degrees longitude and almost seven degrees latitude away, in the fourth climate. *Derbend* lies in the fifth climate, on the western shore of the Caspian Sea, as I have said. While *Der Ahanin* or *Bab elhadid* is said to be under the rule of the *Chacqân* (i.e. the great king of the eastern Tartars), *Derbend* is subject to the Persians. Today, it is the outermost border of the Persians' dominion, near to the Caucasian mountains. Presently barbarian people, namely of Tartar origin, it is said, inhabit the areas which stretch from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. The designation as Tartars is given to them as infidels not inappropriately by the neighboring Christians, in particular the Georgians. Presumably because the Tartars were the first Muhammedans encountered by people in these parts, they call all who devote themselves to the perfidy of Muhammed Tatar, that is, Tartars.⁵⁵

Be this as it may, the barbarians who inhabit this part of the Caucasus are more properly called *Lexghî* or *Legzî*; like boundary stones, they divide the Persian empire and the Georgians from the Circassians. I could not learn clearly enough whether most of them are Muhammedans or pagans, or whether some of their people may be Christians, if they are worthy of this name, for among the Georgians and the Circassians there are also Christians. I think, however, that it is better to assume that they are nearly atheists, and that few among them can be found who confess any sect without guile. What we know for sure is that they are robbers, infesting all boundaries in a hostile way. They continuously plague with attacks either the Georgians or the Circassians, and they enjoy stealing human beings more than anything else. Prisoners of all ages and both sexes they either return, for the ransom they seek, or sell for ransom to the Muhammedans in the city of *Derbend* and perhaps elsewhere. Some nobles

⁵⁵ Della Valle's speculation has no substance. The Tatars were not the first Muslims in the Caucasus Mountains. They only came there during the fifteenth century. The European name Tartar for the Tatars is a corruption and a misled derivation from *Tartaros*, the ancient netherworld, leading to the identification of the Tatars in the Middle Ages with Satan and his offspring. We chose to translate Della Valle's "perfidia" as "perfidy" because there is no single word rendering the complex meaning ascribed to Muhammad and Islam in the early modern period. Muhammad was then considered in Catholic and Protestant Europe as an impostor, liar, and seducer. Islam was seen as a falsehood, a treachery, and a superstition. Muslims were denounced as dishonest, scheming, thieving infidels.

of this people, adherents of the Muhammedan perfidy, have lived in the name of hospitality with King Abbas, and are held in great respect at the Persian court. When I was a guest of the king I have often seen them during pleasant banquets, and have spoken with them in polite company.

Beyond the city of Vacuh, at the western end of the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, lies the region of Ghilàn.⁵⁶ This name means mud.⁵⁷ The earth here is namely very muddy and humid and hence, as I believe, abundant in snakes, although they are not dangerous. The soil is also very fertile in the production of silk thread and the fruits of the earth, and is the only region in all of Agiamia to grow olives. But the air is rather unhealthy. The sea here is also rich in fish; the best salmon is exported to Sphahanum and other areas. As I have said, Ghilàn is bounded on the north by the Caspian Sea, and has Scervàn as its neighbor to the west, and Adherbaigiàn to the south. Between Ghilàn and Adherbaigiàn runs a long range of mountains, the Taurus, a very strong bulwark against hostile invasion from this side. Finally, to the east of Ghilàn lies Mazanderàn, a region worthy of being known, but thus far little known to us.⁵⁸ Since I have traversed it myself, I have decided to describe Mazanderàn very carefully, hoping that my proximity will not vex the honored reader.

I know not the meaning of Mazanderàn, for nothing about it can be found in the dictionaries of the Persians, other than that the word is plural in form (as are most Persian names for cities and regions), and that the name is proper to this region.⁵⁹ It lies exactly in the middle of the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, though in my opinion it stretches a bit more to the east. To the east it borders on Esterabàd, to the west on Ghilàn, to the north on the Caspian Sea, and to the south on Araq. Mazanderàn is securely divided from Araq by

⁵⁶ "Supra civitatem Vah-cuh . . ."; "Supra" is taken here to mean "southern," following Pliny 2,73,75, 183: "Simili modo tradunt in Syene oppido, quod est supra Alexandriam . . ." While this interpretation is geographically correct, Della Valle's letters to Schipano suggest that he used "supra" in its literal meaning of "above," i.e. "northern." He wrote to Schipano (the emphasis is ours): "Camminando più verso ponente, pur intorno al mar Caspio, sotto alla provincia di Ghilan, si trova, congiunta a quella l'Albania; e prima la città di Bacù, o, come dicono i Persiani, Vahcuh . . ." Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle*, 1:587-88.

⁵⁷ This invented etymology is based upon taking the word as a plural form of *gil*, which indeed means "mud." According to Rabino di Borgomale (see note 7), the name of the region is derived from the Avestan word "Varena," which designates a region north of mount Elburz; *Les Provinces Caspiennes*, 17.

⁵⁸ I.e. Della Valle's compatriots in Catholic Europe.

⁵⁹ According to Rabino di Borgomale, Mazandaran also comes from an Avestan name of a region bordering Varena. The form of Mazandaran and Gilan does not represent a plural, as Della Valle believed on the basis of modern Persian, but comes—according to Rabino di Borgomale—from the adjectives "Varenya" and "Mazainya." The two expressions indicated that these regions were inhabited by bad spirits. *Les Provinces Caspiennes*, 17.

the same range of mountains [the Taurus] that runs between Ghilàn and Adherbaigiàn. These very high mountains, everywhere almost inaccessible,⁶⁰ provide for the traveler coming from Aràq only one entrance, through a narrow valley that extends for a distance of about two days' journey over a fairly smooth and easily defensible track between steep slopes. About half way, where the track rises toward more humid peaks, is the city of Firuz-cuh, that is, Victorious Mountain. This city is thought to mark the border between Mazanderàn and Aràq. It is worth mentioning here that the mountains, whose slopes stretch north into Mazanderàn, are entirely wooded, being planted with slender trees; because of the blossoming herbs they also have a green hue, strongly resembling Italy's Apennines at their most beautiful. But to the south, towards Aràq, the slopes are arid, like the whole region; without water, trees, or herbs, they have an inhospitable aspect. After Firuz-cuh the track for travelers to Araq divides in two; one road runs northwest, or rather west, under plane-trees without number, notably tall, giving shade, through the city of Taheràn, and on to Qazvinum. The other runs directly south to Kascianum, across the mountain called Siah-cuh, that is, Black Mountain. Before reaching the track into the mountains one comes to a large, marshy plain, fed by streams from all sides, with a particularly large stream in the middle, whose water is bitter, and flows under a bridge. Since it was in former times very difficult to traverse this area—men and animals dared not pass, due to the depth and viscosity of the mud—King Abbàs, with his customary care for the public good, has caused the track to be paved with broad stones, making a road of some five miles that looks very straight to the eye.

On the track leading into the Siah-cuh mountains one encounters another plain, having a whitish, salty surface that is very dry in summer. Because the salt reflects the sun's rays, this plain is nowadays almost impenetrable due to the extreme heat. Hence travelers usually take another route. This track is covered in winter by salty water, sometimes as high as the bellies of the animals, but it is easily passable nonetheless: not only is there no complaint due to the simmering heat, but the earth below the water, forming the track, is firm enough for horses and pedestrians to proceed without difficulty. To make the track recognizable, lest wayfarers stray into areas having deep and viscous mud, the way is marked by black stones that are set erect, like pillars, and in a straight line, so that the traveler can see from one to the next.⁶¹ This place is called in Persian Nemek-zâr, that is, "the place of the salt," or "the salt-works." Here people coming from Araq find two tracks: one goes north through Siah-cuh

⁶⁰ We follow the manuscript, which has "inaccessus," rather than "inascensus," as the edition. See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 292.

⁶¹ Della Valle wrote literally: "(the stones) . . . look at each other from afar." See also Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:177. This road that connected Abbasabad Siahkuh with Garmsar was built between 1600 and 1610. See Wolfram Kleiss, "Die Karawanenwege in Iran aus Frühislamischer Zeit," *Studia Iranica* 5 (1987): 142.

and through the narrow valley I mentioned, to Mazanderàn; the other goes east to Chorasàn. This track crosses the Taurus Mountains, which not only separate Araç from Mazanderàn, but also continue to the east, separating Araç from Chorasàn.

Now let us turn to Mazanderàn, from which we have briefly turned away, although not without reason or sense. The soil here is very much like that of Ghilàn, humid and muddy, so much so that there are places where in winter time camels sink in up to their bellies. I once followed this track from sunrise to sunset, but during the whole day, because of the obstacles the camels had to endure, I could not pass more than two *ferseng* (that is, Persian *parasangs*, which correspond to Spanish miles). Still, the soil is fertile, rich in all kinds of plants and trees; I have seen there chicory, borage, and other excellent herbs known in our climes, which I have not found anywhere else in all of Agiamia. The supply of fruit is huge; quinces and lemons, especially beautiful, are brought for sale even to Sphahanum. Wild vines, mostly in the woods, also offer grapes to the traveler. The growing of wheat is less successful here, I believe because of the humidity. This is why the cities and villages that are very numerous here are especially populous along the track that leads to Araç; many natives have been induced by the king to come down from the mountains and settle along the track, for the greater convenience of travelers.^{62,63}

I should add that in the villages almost no bread is made from wheat, rather it is made from rice; rice aplenty is available, due to the humidity. In the larger cities (these are few) there is some bread made from wheat, but it is consumed more by strangers than by natives. The frugality of these people⁶⁴ I cannot pass over in silence. They mainly eat fish, of which there are many sorts, and plain rice, boiled in water and flavored with vinegar or other sour juices. They eat no meat, almost no bread, and no food to which fat has been added; this last they consider unhealthy, although, having spent some time there myself, my experience was different. In summer the air is rather unhealthy. This comes from the strong evaporations of the Caspian Sea, I believe, which rise upward and are blown across the regions by winds, until they are stopped by that continuous chain of mountains I have so often mentioned; since these vapors cannot be scattered elsewhere, through the air, they undoubtedly bring about considerable corruption. Whether it be for this reason, or because of their modest diet, I know not, but the faces of the natives are rarely of a ruddy complexion, mostly ashen or at least colorless. Even so the women are very beautiful, because of their white skin, and the charm of their black eyes and black hair. Although they mainly live in villages, they are very sociable and civilized.

⁶² We follow here the manuscript that has "peregrinantium," not the edition that has "commoditatem." See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 293.

⁶³ See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:209.

⁶⁴ The manuscript has "gentium" ("de earum gentium sobrietate"), the edition "gente." See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 293.

Because all people of both sexes are very obliging, and welcome strangers, I never had to pay for anything in the entire region. As soon as night fell, we were hospitably received in some noble place in the next village or town to which we came. Thanks to my wife, all the men and most of the wives of the notable men at once took an interest in how we fared. They brought us not a few gifts which we subsequently reciprocated, giving from among the things we carried with us presents that were pleasant to them, my wife to the women, and I to the men. We passed with them many a gay night, with splendid dinners, long speeches after dinner and many merry songs, sung by girls or (as the evening progressed) sung in chorus. Only at sunrise did we leave behind our many friends, content with the comparable gifts we had given them more for honor's sake than for the sake of value. We made it a point to follow this rule, so as to part as people who, if ever returning along the same route, would be welcome in the houses of our very same hosts. They would consider the rules of hospitality violated if it were done otherwise. This received and laudable custom is preserved as holy and inviolable throughout the empire of the Persians.⁶⁵

Mazanderàn's capital is presently Ferhabàd, a name meaning *laetitia colonia*. King Abbas began⁶⁶ to build it a few years ago, but it is not yet finished. It is less than two miles away from the Caspian Sea, situated on both banks of a medium-sized river spanned by a well-built bridge. This river is called by the inhabitants Tegginé-rud (with a three-syllable pronunciation only, the sound of which cannot be expressed easily by our letters), a name that means something like rapid river.⁶⁷ It originates from various sources in the mountains separating Araq from Mazandaràn; then it runs through deep rounded valleys, also through ponds and even fields of rice. That is why its water is now rather unhealthy. Finally, it descends a short slope to the sea. From the Caspian the river is navigable to a small city called Sarù or Sari, that is, saffron-colored, with small boats, mostly carved out from a single tree trunk, and no doubt also with flat river-barges capable of transporting large cargo.⁶⁸ This city is four *ferseng* from Ferhabad, not far from the mountains, on the road that goes to Araq. Between it and Ferhabad lies a wide plain, cultivated mainly by Georgians; it was once forested, but those moving in cut down the trees. Settlements in this region are almost all villages. Even the capital, Ferhabàd, is not walled, as

⁶⁵ Compare to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:213.

⁶⁶ We follow here the manuscript, which has "coepta," while the edition has "capta." See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 293.

⁶⁷ According to his remark in the original letter from Farhabad and Qazvin, written at the beginning of May 1618 and finished July 25, 1618, Della Valle meant to say that he could not transliterate "Tejne" easily into Italian. The present-day spelling of the river's name is "Tajan," but it has no connection whatsoever with "fast, quick" or similar words.

⁶⁸ Compare to Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 234-35.

is true for almost all the other cities of the Persians.⁶⁹ But it is large enough to have several broad, straight avenues running miles from one side of town to the other; the avenues cross over canals that carry away the water and dry out the mud. Because of the excessive humidity, the mud is very deep, and causes great inconveniences. This was why, even when I was there, they had begun to pave many of the streets with stone.

In my time there Mazenderàn was so populous that the inhabitants of the cities were numbered not in persons but in families: among people brought here from elsewhere are counted first those of the Muhammedans having been brought there from the region of Scervàn, 25,000 families; then 12,000 Georgian families. They were Christians originally, but not having righteous shepherds to care for their souls, very many converted daily to the perfidy of Muhammed, partly due to poverty, partly due to ambition. Next 40,000 Armenian families, of the same kind of fidelity towards Christ; and 7,000 Jewish families, brought from Georgia where they originated. These numbers do not include natives of Mazanderàn and Ghilàn, or the courtiers and soldiers who come yearly with the king, or the countless others who meet here to carry on trade or other kinds of business.⁷⁰

The houses—or better, huts—are mostly made from the earth, very rough, and densely covered by thin reeds bound together.⁷¹ These reeds are in their

⁶⁹ Della Valle claimed in his letters to Schipano that all towns in Persia were without walls. See *ibid.*, 4:178. There, the claim is part of a statement about Tabriz, however, where Della Valle had never been; thus, he did not know by his own experience whether or not Tabriz was surrounded by a wall. It is highly likely that he has taken this idea of wall-free Persian towns from one of the European books he had read at home or while traveling. Moreover, the claim discussed here does not hold true for all or most Persian towns. One example of a walled town was Derbend. Shah Abbas even built new walls there in the 1620s. See, for instance, Paolo Cuneo, "Le Mura di Derbent" *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 59 (1985): 65-66, illustrations 2, 3. Other examples include the royal cities of Qazwin and Isfahan, both of which had rather impressive town walls. See, for instance, Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, 176.

⁷⁰ See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:271, where Della Valle gives the same numbers as learned from an Armenian from Farhabad, except for those of the Georgians and the Armenians. In this letter, he does not mention Armenians among the inhabitants of Farhabad at all and ascribes the number of 40,000 to the Georgians.

⁷¹ In Latin, Della Valle describes the material used for the houses as made from "terra" and "arundum," while in his letters to Schipano he wrote that it consisted of mud and straw, a detail he mentions both in Italian and in Persian: "I muri delle case in Ferhabad gli fanno di una materia usata assai in questa parti, che conforme la chiamano *Cah-ghil*, cioè *Terra e paglia*, non è altro che terra arenosa, impastata a modo di calce con un poco di paglia trita mescolata, la quale tuttavia senza pietre, nè altri sassi, così da sè fa buonissima presa." Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle*, 1:601-2. For the Latin text, see Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 294 (our emphasis). Since the Persian "kah-gil" indeed means "straw-mud," Della Valle's explanation to Schipano is preferable to his choice of words in the geographical text. See F. Steingass, *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (New Delhi, 1996), 1066, column 2.

experience suitable for keeping out the rain, which falls in winter not very heavily, but very often. There are many houses the walls of which are also made from reed. That is why they are at the mercy of fires, to which whole parts of the town fall victim.⁷² Although I do not believe that things will stay this way in the future, it is no wonder that such a thing happens in young cities. Even when I was there, the *grandees* were having remarkable houses built, so it is likely that others too will be built more firmly. I have seen more than forty ovens constantly busy making bricks. The king made such an effort to finish the city quickly that the highest satrap of the Mazanderan region—Mirza Taqī, whom they call vizier (the king himself ordered him to see to my needs)—was able to show me a number of spacious houses, already inhabited; these he had caused to be built himself, from the foundations to the roof, in a space of fifteen days.⁷³ The palace of the king, which had already been built on the west bank of the river, was daily enlarged. On the east bank, where the river channel is very narrow, trees were planted in straight rows, houses had beautiful gardens and mirrors, and secluded spots were created, suitable for hunting or recreation.⁷⁴

East of Ferhabad, about a mile away, there is another river of the same size called Cinàn or Cinòn. After crossing it and traversing a spacious and fertile plain, one can see the facade of another city, *Escrèf*; meaning the very noble.⁷⁵ This city lies six *ferseng* or Spanish miles east from Ferhabad, and two miles from the Caspian Sea. It is the newest of all the cities that the same king began to build only a short time ago, on a very pleasant site richly endowed with water, and with woods abounding in all kinds of game. Here the plain meets mountains that are not as high. King Abbas chose this place for himself as a special, secluded, and solitary site of pleasure for diverting his mind. That is why he chose to found here a large city, built in the best manner, with a mixture of native people and immigrants. It has streets marked in order and sequence, markets, temples, bath houses, and other buildings private as well as public for receiving guests. In the year of the Lord 1618, when I was there myself, houses, unfinished and not yet very high, but elegant nonetheless, were being built for the king and the royal ladies, as well as graceful gar-

⁷² See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:233.

⁷³ Compare to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:233. From 1599, Mazanderan was a crown domain land and thus ruled by a vizier installed by the court. Provinces that were not crown domain lands were ruled by military commanders, the *umara*. In these provinces, there was a vizier to administer taxes and finance; if appointed by the court, the viziers also supervised the *umara* to prevent excessive exploitation of the population, and administered justice. See Röhrborn, *Provinzen und Zentralgewalt Persiens*, 94-131.

⁷⁴ Adorning the interior or exterior of houses, pillars, and other architectural items with mirrors or mirror-tiles was an important element of the Safavid decorative arts.

⁷⁵ The manuscript has the correct spelling “Escrèf,” while the edition has “Eseref.” See Ms Modena γ.S.1.10, f 18a, 13.

dens; these things were shown to me by the king's command. Other houses were being erected for the nobles and the king's ministers, albeit only a few, but not at all insignificant.

In the fertile plain between Escref and Ferhabàd are many villages, inhabited partly by Mazanderanians and partly by Georgians, and also many Turcomans.⁷⁶ This people are of Scythian origin as the Turks and the Tartars are. In my judgment, they and the Turks continue to use the same language; these are the people who have traversed also very many territories of Asia together with other peoples emigrating from Scythia, devastating the world repeatedly with their raids. As a result, many of them are scattered over the entire empire of the Persians. Many can also be found in the deserts of Arabia and Mesopotamia. Many may be met with too in other territories subjugated by the empire of the Turks, in particular in that part of Asia Minor which they call today commonly Caramania; they wander with their tents from place to place, like the Arabs called Scenitae.⁷⁷

The Turcomans who live, as I have said, in the plains of Mazanderàn have the following custom: after setting up cross-beams, they build their houses very high, and well covered with roofs, but in order to have air in the summer time they are not encircled by covering walls, save for curtains made from the lightest reeds. Like netting, these curtains can easily be raised up or taken away as appropriate, either to open a line of sight for the eye or to allow cooling air to enter. The curtains can also be let down, either at one side only (to keep out, as needed, the sun, or excessive wind), or around the entire house. Those on the interior cannot be seen from the outside through the curtains, but they can see everything that happens outside. For climbing up to these tall houses there are no stairs, only a slightly inclined beam from the ground to the entrance to the sitting room, with indentations scooped out to support the feet. This is done, I believe, either because this is all that is needed, or for greater safety. For these houses are like plains in unprotected areas; if access were easy, they would be exposed at night to savage beasts and evil men.

Yet they also have other houses, more firmly built and made from earth. These houses they mainly use during the winter, for preserving the household furniture as well as animals rather than human beings. Almost all Mazanderanian villagers are accustomed to living in towns and villages in winter time, but move with their flocks in summer, over the peaks, to places where the heat is less and where there is more water and plants. They carry with them tall black tents, according to the custom of the Arabs, woven by the wives from goat-wool, and sufficient for keeping out harsh weather.

Before turning to something else, I want to finish this long account of Mazanderàn with one more point. Mazanderàn, stretching into the interior of

⁷⁶ See Ms Modena γ.S.1.10, f 18b, 12.

⁷⁷ The Skenai were, according to Strabo, a tribe in Mesopotamia. The singular of "Skenai" is "Skenites," from which Della Valle's Latin form "Scenitarum" is derived.

the kingdom, and well protected from all sides by the sea and the mountains, which give access to other regions only by passes that are few, narrow, and easily defensible, is considered by King Abbàs to be the safest part of the entire empire. This is why his treasury and some other precious items are held in safe-keeping here. He is convinced, not without reason, that if should happen one day that the inexorable and terrible armies of the Turks, having by some accident defeated all the forces of the Persians, should stream unobstructed through all other regions (which would not be difficult), this one part of Persia, namely Mazanderàn, will be easy to defend.⁷⁸

After Mazanderàn comes the region of Esterabàd, also on the south shore of the Caspian Sea, but towards the east. What else could be the meaning of this name but—because of the abundance of such animals—a “settlement of mules.” But I could not determine this with certainty. To the east it is bordered by Chorasàn, and by certain vast districts that lie between the empire of the Persians and the Tartar Uzbags. In the east it is bordered by Mazanderàn; in the north by the Caspian Sea; and in the south by Araç, with the mountains I have so often mentioned running between the two regions. As is the custom in most provinces of Asia, the royal city has received the same name as the region. The soil supports a rich culture of silk, like that of Mazanderàn, I believe. For the rest I have little knowledge, nor have I heard of other cities worth mentioning.

Chorasan could mean “water-mills” in Persian, or “mutes” in Arabic.⁷⁹ This is undoubtedly the most fertile region of the entire Persian empire, filled with many excellent and extraordinary cities, foremost among which are Heri, the seat of a governor; Nisciabùr, with its noble turquoise mine; and Mescèd (to give its name in our letters as best as can be done), nowadays known as the place of martyrs, but in ancient times called Senabad. There is the famous, richly built tomb of the eighth successor of Muhammed, because it was here that he was poisoned by the hostile sect of Sonnites. This was Abù l’Hasàn Ali, Erridhà or Rizà (that is, the contented, a common surname), descended from Ali and Fatima, Muhammed’s daughter. The Sciàite sect among the Muhammedans of Persia reveres him as a martyr and also calls him *imam*, that is, pontiff, one of twelve they count in succession at the head of their sect. The last imam, hidden away by God, as they believe, still lives, invisible, and is the pontiff of this time until the end of the world. Then he will reappear to establish perfect justice in a world oppressed by injustice. He will convert all peoples into the one community of God, after a certain impious tyrant, called by Muhammedans Deggial (that is, the liar) and by us the Antichrist, has been

⁷⁸ See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:222.

⁷⁹ Both etymologies are wrong. Della Valle suggests that the region’s name *Khuràsân* is derived either from “*khar-âs*” (Persian: donkey capstan) or from one of the two plural forms of “*akhras*” (Arabic: mute, dumb), i.e., “*khursân*” or “*khurs*.”

slain by Jesus Christ.⁸⁰ This is what they tell. At Satan's perfidious suggestion, they ascribe to their false pontiff miracles that belong to the Lord, our Redeemer. Between the Sonnites and the Sciàites there is a great and very profound difference in belief regarding this last pontiff, and also the succession of the other, preceding pontiffs; this divides the Persians and the Turks into groups that hate each other irreconcilably, and plague each other with continuous wars. One of these pseudo-pontiffs, as I would say, the eighth in succession according to the Sciàites, was the aforementioned Rizà, to whose tomb in Mescèd many believers flock to venerate it, even from the most remote areas.

To the east and especially the north Chorasàn has as its neighbor, I believe, the Uzbags and some other Tartar tribes, each of which has its own name. Because of the confusion among contemporary authors it is customary to ascribe the name of Tartars to many peoples—to Bactrians and Sogdians as well as to Asian and European Scythians and many others in their vicinity—but it is properly ascribed only to a single tribe of Scythians in the far east of Asia, the Tatars. The others each have their own names, as I have said.

To return to the course of our discussion, Chorasàn adjoins Araq in the west, and in the south Kirmàn and other provinces, if I am not mistaken. I dare not speak of the regions of Sistàn, Zabelistàn, and Sigistàn, since I do not even know for certain if they are adjacent to Chorasàn, or members of Chorasàn, contained partly or completely within it, or whether these regions are now subject to the empire of the Persians.⁸¹ We do have to mention the city of Candahàr and its region, which King Abbàs took by force the year before last from the hands of the Great Mogul, adding it to the Persian empire in a deed of lasting fame. I am sure that it borders on Chorasàn, and lies beyond the city of Herì, but I dare not say with certainty where it is, though I think it likely that it lies to the northeast.⁸² From the historical accounts of the Persians I have learned that Candahàr is the capital of the region of Zabelistàn, which, as some of our geographers claim, was called Paropamissum in antiquity.⁸³

The region of Kirmàn, retaining until today the name it was given in antiquity, is the fertile Caramania of the ancients. On the east and south I believe it borders the territories of the region of Candahàr, lying between the Persian Empire and the Indus River; one of these may be Sistàn. To the west, it adjoins the region called Persia, to the north Chorasàn and part of Araq, if I am not mistaken. In the south, it is next to the region of Macràn, and to that part of

⁸⁰ The word we translate as "one community of God" is "ovile," i.e. "sheep-fold." Calling the believers "sheep" or "flock" is common in the Catholic Church, while it is less widespread among the various Protestant denominations.

⁸¹ Sistan and Sigistan designate the same region.

⁸² Qandahar lies southeast from Herat.

⁸³ One of the contemporary geographical works Della Valle used is the *Epitome Geographica* of Philippus Ferrarius. See note 18.

the ancient Caramania that ran as far as the end of the Red Sea, and that has had until our time its own prince, in no way subject to Persia. In recent years, while we followed the armies of King Abbàs, renowned for his successes against the Turks who had invaded Agjamia, the brother of the adolescent prince of Macran, a traitor to his homeland, became the first of his people to flee to Persia, to the city of Qazvin. There he met King Abbàs. Led by the desire to become ruler with the help of the Persians, he promised to give his loyalty to the king, and to subdue the entire region of Macran, if given troops.⁸⁴ Nonetheless his offer was in vain, at least while I remained at the Persian court. Neither did Persia help him on such an expedition, nor did he make any progress on his own; like an exile and renegade, hating himself, he lived among the Persians as a guest of King Abbàs, almost begging for his living. But after Hormùz had been occupied by the Persians, in May 1622, the region of Macràn and its prince obeyed the king as Persians do, as had never happened previously.⁸⁵ I know not if the prince who ruled Macràn had perhaps died, or if the brother who had gone over to the king invaded Macràn, or if the two brothers (presuming both are alive) may have resumed their friendship, with the one who rules now persuaded either by fear of the king (ruling in Hormùz) or by reasons of commercial utility. One common rumor has it that many groups of merchants from infidel country in India have arrived by ship in Guadel (because of the war one cannot sail as formerly to Hormùz, since Portuguese ships bar the way); having purchased camels for a high price in Guadèl, in the dominions of the prince of Macran, they are said to have traversed the desert of the Ichthyophages, and passed through fertile Caramania, until they came safely to Sphahan, and dispersed from there throughout Persia.

In the region of Kirmàn the ancient pagan worship of the Persian Magi survives until the present day. The people use an ancient language, and differ from others in their appearance, in particular by the color of their dress, which resembles the color of cooked flesh. They cultivate beards and the hair of the head, live their rites, and zealously devote themselves to tending the fire, diligently and continuously maintaining it. They are truly the indigenous people among the Persians. Many of them live in the city of Yezd, in the region of Araç, as I believe, between Kirmàn and Sphahàn. To Sphahan not a few of the ancient Persians, called by the Muhammedans Gabri (something like “not circumcised” or “indigenous”), have been brought from Kirmàn and Yezd by King Abbàs.⁸⁶ They inhabit one of the four cities that make up the tetrapolis

⁸⁴ Compare to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:25.

⁸⁵ This and the following four phrases form in the Latin text one single sentence. The subordination of its individual parts under each other is not always clear. Other interpretations than the one given here are possible.

⁸⁶ In modern Persian, *Gabri* can be an adjective or a noun derived from *gabr*. The word used to signify “an ancient Persian, one of the Magi of the sect of Zoroaster, a priest of the worshippers of fire; a pagan, infidel”: Steingass, *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, 1075, column 1; or “Zarathustrier; Zarathustrismus; Gabridialekt; zarathus-

of Sphahan, called Gabrabad, that is, "the settlement of the indigenous." They have built it themselves, as far as the south bank of the Zenderùd (or living river, as it would be in Latin), and as far east as the avenue called Ceharbàgh, meaning "four gardens."⁸⁷ This is the avenue that divides Gabrabad from Ciolfa, the city of the Armenians, which also lies on the south bank of the river. North of the river Ceharbagh divides the larger city properly called Sphahan, across the river from Gabrabad, from the recently founded settlement of people from Tebriz, which was at first called Tebrizabàd. Presently, however, the colonists call it after the king's name, Abbasabad, or city of Abbas.

Kirmàn is adjoined by another maritime region, either to the south, or as the Persians say, to the southwest, since it inclines slightly more to the west. This region is called Moghistan, that is, palm-forest,⁸⁸ a name it got from its palm trees. There are almost no cities and only a few towns, hardly fortified. Nonetheless there are very many dwellings dispersed among the palm forests, made from wood and palm leaves, not from any other material. This region is either what the ancients called the desert of Caramania, or one of its parts. It is bordered by Macràn in the east, to the west along the coast by the region of Persia, and to the north by Kirmàn, with a chain of mountains dividing Moghistan from Kirmàn. In the south, along the Persian Gulf, we find ports—because of the lack of safety, we might better call them (with Maronian) anchoring places for ships. Among these the best known are Giask, Kuhestèk, Hibrahimi, Duser, and Kombrù, which the Persians have call Abbasi since they took it from the Portuguese a few years ago, under King Abbas.⁸⁹ Straight across from this place, two or three miles away, lies the island of Hormùz; this is, however, the name of the city there, for the island is properly called Girùn.⁹⁰ The

trisch," according to Heinrich F.J. Junker and Bozorg Alavi, *Wörterbuch Persisch-Deutsch* (Leipzig, 1965), 623, column 1.

⁸⁷ The correct name of the river is Zayandah-rud, but in colloquial Persian it is called Zenderud. The name "Caharbagh" also alludes to the theoretical concept of Iranian gardening art and its mystical aspects.

⁸⁸ Later, Della Valle chose a different spelling of the word: Moghostan.

⁸⁹ Della Valle overstates the case. Kombru, i.e., Gamerun, was a small fishermen's village. It was turned into a port only during the reign of Abbas. Moreover, Della Valle is overtly partisan ascribing to the Portuguese the right of occupying territories wherever they go while denying the same right to the Safavids or the English. Della Valle's partisanship was religiously based.

⁹⁰ This information Della Valle may have taken from al-Jurjani, who called Hormuz the capital of Jarun, put it into the third climate, and ascribed the following geographical coordinates to it: longitude 45° [sic, presumably a scribal error for 85°] 0', latitude 30°30'. Ms Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, Vat. P 66, ff 14a and 18a. The same values are given in one set of copies of al-Khazini's geographical table from the twelfth century. David King, *World-Maps for Finding the Direction and Distances to Mecca: Innovation and Tradition in Islamic Science*, vol. 36 of *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science: Texts and Studies*, ed. H. Daiber and D. Pingree (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 1999), 578; King remarks that the latitude value "probably results from a copyist's error for 32°; 30°." The other set of copies gives for the latitude 30°50'. *Ibid.*, 578. Abu

island is of small circumference and suffers under an unbelievably great heat, which is more unbearable than anywhere else on earth. The whole island is so infertile that one finds no herbs or water, nor anything else at all except salt, the substance of its soil. Nevertheless, it was formerly a very flourishing city, adorned with royal dignity (for much can be accomplished by the accursed hunger for gold), as a famous fortress of the Portuguese and the richest trading place in the entire world.⁹¹ Recently, however, as I have said already, the territory has been occupied by the Persians. Its king, who not only paid tribute for long years to the Portuguese, but was subjugated by them, has been brought as prisoner to Persia. The city has been almost completely destroyed, and emptied of inhabitants. Nothing remains but the fortress. Strong currents of war have been set in motion, by the Portuguese to regain Hormuz, and by the Persians to preserve it. May God grant success to our side!⁹²

In addition to Hormuz, two other islands lie off the coast of Moghostân. But Larêk is very small and nowadays deserted, though it may once have been otherwise; it is quite uncultivated, with forests, and wild goats. It is in the middle of the Gulf, almost equally distant from Arabia and Persia.⁹³ The other

l-Fida' called the island Zaru. He gave the following coordinates for Hormuz, "according to al-Biruni's Qanun: 95° 32'30" according to a variant [of the Qanun]: 95° 30'33"; according to Ibn Sa'id 94° 28'23"; according to the anonymous Kitab al-atwal: 92° 25'." Abu l-Fida', *Géographie d'Aboulfeda*, ed. M. Reinaud, Mac Guckin de Slane (Beirut, 1840), 338-39. The many sources surveyed in King, *World-Maps*, 471, 483, 502, 508, 511, 513, 557, 578, have 84°; 85°; 90°; 92° for the town's longitude and 25°; 25°30'; 26°; 30°30'; 30°50'; 32°; 32°30'; 35°30' 36° for the latitude. King called 36° an error for 26° as well as 30°30' an error for 32°30', but did not comment on 35° 30'. *Ibid.*, 471, 502, 509, 578. The differences in longitude result most likely from the usage of different prime meridians. The differences in latitude suggest that different towns were meant. In addition to the island, two towns called Hormuz were known on the Iranian mainland. One of them was at the coast of the Persian Gulf, near to the island of Hormuz. The other one, also called Dih-i Guz, was situated northeast from Jiruft (longitude 83° latitude 30°10' (b) or 31°45' (a) in al-Khazini's table). See W.C. Brice, *A Historical Atlas of Islam*, (Leiden, 1981), 16; King, *World-Maps*, 471. Thus, the second Hormuz on the main land comes close to the values given by al-Khazini and repeated by al-Jurjani, who mistook it, however, for the town on the island. The island's name was known in a truncated form to European mapmakers several decades before Della Valle as "Geru." This name can be found on maps of the Ottoman Empire published by Abraham Ortelius in 1575 and 1580 and by Henricus Hondius in 1613. See Khaled Al Ankary, *La Péninsule Arabique dans les cartes européennes anciennes: fin XV-début XIX siècle* (Paris, 2001), 138-40, 165-67.

⁹¹ Again, Della Valle overstates the case, expressing his personal dismay over the loss of the island to the Safavids. The remark between parentheses is an indirect quotation of Virgil, 3:57. Why Della Valle added it here remains unclear.

⁹² Della Valle sided in this conflict unwaveringly with the Portuguese, mostly because of the shared faith and creed. This, at least, is what he implied in his letters to Schipano.

⁹³ This is an imprecise claim. Della Valle may have taken it from a European map of Asia or the Arabian Peninsula, since in four maps we have seen (three maps of the Arabian Peninsula, one by Nicolas Sanson printed in 1654, the second by Jan Jansson printed in 1658, the third by Willem Janszoon Blaeu printed in 1662, and a map of

and larger island, though narrow, is two or three days' journey in length, and is full of villages and rich in fruits and vegetables. Along its entire length the island is close to the coast of Persia. Its common name is Kesem. It has a promontory from which one can look towards Hormuz, where the fortress—built by the Portuguese with so much labor, to secure a supply of water for the city of Hormuz—was conquered by the Persians after a long siege, prior to their destruction of the city.

Another larger island called Bahrein, best known for pearl-diving, formerly obeyed the king of Hormuz, as did the surrounding mainland, but it too is now under Persian rule. It is, however, far from the shores of Moghostàn, and lies in the interior Gulf, close to Arabia. There are other small islands dispersed throughout the Gulf, close to Moghostàn and Persia, either deserted or sparsely inhabited, because of the war, and most of them are also subject to Persia. As for the inhabitants of this region, the poorer men of Moghostàn go naked, barely covering their genitals with a narrow piece of cloth. The rich wear a thin shirt, reaching only to the thighs, or other forms of short clothing, because of the extreme heat. The women wear a tight and very thin chemise reaching to the navel, as is the custom among certain people in India. This chemise is dark blue or mostly black, and covers the arms only half way. Over it and on their heads, they wear another thin garment when they go out. From the navel to their feet they wrap themselves two or three times in a veil which is as long as it is wide, reaching to the ankles, and made either from silk or from a mixture of silk and cotton. Otherwise nude, they wear on their feet sandals made from palm leaves, as the men do. In addition to their gilded bracelets and necklaces, they adorn their nostrils not with small rings, as Arab and Persian women do, but with a gilded disk applied to the right nostril. The disk is either long and narrow, pointing upwards from the nostril, or small and rectangular, having the figure of a rhombus, with two acute angles above and two obtuse angles below. The disks differ according to the gems attached to them. This form of adornment surely comes from somewhere else, far away. The people of Moghostàn are brownish in color, due to the fact that the sun

Asia (?) by Frederick De Wit published in c. 1670), there is an island situated either between the island of Hormuz and the northern tip of the Arabian Peninsula or southwest from Hormuz. The name of this island is spelled differently: Lorera (Sanson), Lareque (Jansson, Blaeu), or Lenreca (?) (De Wit). This suggests that there was an earlier map on which all these cartographers depended, directly or through intermediaries. Given the spelling of Jansson and Blaeu, this ancestor probably was a Portuguese map. See King, *World-Maps*, 216 and Al Ankary, *La Péninsule Arabique*, 197, 202, 204. Della Valle had seen several European maps of Iran and other parts of the world as he wrote in his letters to Schipano. See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 6:311. He may also have taken this idea from a sea chart. In his letters to Schipano, he reported about a chart that the captain of the English ship bringing him to Surat had followed from the Strait of Hormuz. In the same letter, he also made clear that he had seen Portuguese sea charts of the Indian Ocean. See *ibid.* 267, 269.

here is too close to the vertex. Nevertheless the women are quite lovely, as is true among almost all Asians.⁹⁴ As for food, they eat almost no bread or meat; they eat mostly fish, rice, and grapes that are abundant, and very good. Other fruits are not lacking either, especially quinces, lemon, fennel, and certain other trees mostly unknown in our latitudes.

The air is not very healthy in areas by the sea. Consequently, the region was for me a most unfortunate one. Because it was no longer possible to travel with Portuguese ships to Hormùz due to the war between the Persians and the Portuguese, I waited for English ships to arrive, to travel with them to India. But fortune (as I believe) wished to deny me a happy return to my homeland. My sweet wife Maani Gioredia, a heroic and perfectly virtuous virgin when I married her, was thereafter a most loyal companion in all joys and pains as well as in the marriage-bed; to her alone could I turn for relief from sorrow and need while traveling.⁹⁵ She was in the first bloom of youth, and had always been in good health, but now in the year of Our Lord 1621, in the month of December, she was taken with a very grave fever, within the walls of the city of Mina (one of the most notable of this region, at a latitude of 26 degrees, 35 minutes and 2 seconds from the equator to Arcturus). She first lost her long awaited child, and because of the miscarriage her condition worsened; the whole art of medicine and all useful remedies failed. When it pleased God to call her from this misfortune to an immortal and better life, he left me behind as a widower, bereft of all good things, in mourning and inconsolable so long as I live.

Adjoining the region of Moghostàn is Persia proper, commonly called Faris or Fars, or Farsistàn. We might translate it into our language as the “region of the horsemen.” Namely, Fars means horseman in Arabic, but in Persian it has no meaning as far as I can tell. It is reasonable to call the Persians horsemen, for in their wars the fighting is always done by cavalry, never by infantry, unless there is need to scale the walls of a town. This is why today both the name and the language of the Persians are common to all peoples of Agiamia. It is by no means a surprise that Persian has certain Arabic names, because the Arab language is very ancient, because the country has a long border with Persia, and because the Arab alphabet, in use for over a thousand years, is spread through the entire Orient more than any other. We might better say that no one should regard it as strange that what the Latins called Persis (just as the ancient Persians did) is now written and pronounced Fars.⁹⁶ For the

⁹⁴ Compare the same description in Della Valle’s letters, which differs only slightly from the one given here. Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 5:375-76.

⁹⁵ “. . . omnis curae casusque levamen,” or “(person offering) relief from all sorrow and need”: Virgil, 3:709. “when I married her” is an addition to the original. Sitti Maani Gioérida (d. 1622) came from an Assyrian Christian family living in Baghdad, but originally from Mardin. She married Della Valle in 1616 and traveled with him through Iran, Della Valle embalmed her dead body and carried it along for the remaining few years of his travels. In 1626, he buried her remains ceremonially in the mausoleum of his family in Rome.

⁹⁶ Compare the same discussion in Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 2:388-89. We follow the manuscript, which has “effertur,” while the edition has “effatur.”

Arabic alphabet, in which the Persian language is now written, does not have a P, and in that region P is commonly equated to F or Ph. In the same manner E, which Arabic does not have as a vowel, is replaced by Aliph.⁹⁷ Thus the first syllable of the name for the region changes from Pars to Phars. Because case endings necessary in Greek and Latin are also unknown among the Orientals, the name Persis easily degenerates into Phars or Fars.

To the east Persia borders Kirmàn (and perhaps a bit of Moghostàn), to the west Lorstàn, to the north Araç, and to the south the remainder of Moghostàn (if there be any) and the Persian Gulf. The region's capital today is Sciraz, not an ancient town, and apparently built by Arab kings. At a distance of ten miles to the north, or rather the northeast, lies the site the Persians call Astehâr.⁹⁸ This was once the ancient Persepolis, situated in a large and fertile plain surrounded by mountains on all sides, and watered by small streams and also by a well-known river, which Diodorus Siculus and other ancient authors called the Araxes (though it must be far away from the other river of the same name, among the Armenians), while today's inhabitants call it the Kur. This name Kur does not disagree with the earlier name Cyrus, for the stream flowing from a cave in Persia, where the later King Cyrus was once exposed to the elements. This was why the river was called Cyrus, though its earlier name was Agradatus. The two names Kur and Cyrus are in my view consonant, because both start with K, and we know it was the custom of the ancients to pronounce the Greek Ypsilon of Cyrus as the vowel U. Hence it is certain that Kyros (as Latins say it) and Kuros (as Greeks say it) are the same. When the inflections proper to the Greeks and Latins (but unknown to the Persians and almost all other Orientals) are taken away, the name Kur clearly remains, and this, as I have said, is what the river is now called. One might perhaps also say with reason that the Persian rivers Araxes and Cyrus, mentioned in ancient histories, were one and the same river, namely this one; nothing we know bears witness against this assumption, and no other river in all of this region seems worthy of the name Cyrus. In Media Atropatia there is another river called Kur in the same way, as we know from the reports of our geographers and those of the Persians.⁹⁹

Incidentally, the ruins of Persepolis are still there, as are those of many royal tombs carved out of grottos in the surrounding mountains; the facades are

⁹⁷ The manuscript has "E," while the editor replaced it with an incorrect "I." See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 298.

⁹⁸ In the manuscript, "duodecim" is cancelled and replaced by "decem," while the edition kept "duodecim." In his diary, Della Valle noted that Cehel Minar, the ruins of ancient Persepolis, was ten miles away from Shiraz if one considered the straight distance. Since they had to find a bridge for crossing the river Kur, however, it took them two more miles to reach the ancient site. Ms Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, Ottoboniano latino 3382, ff 153b-154a.

⁹⁹ See the same discussion in Della Valle's letters to Schipano, where he makes, however, a different and more elaborate kind of argument in favor of his conclusion. Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 5:308-9, 311.

adorned and painted with beautiful and diverse figures that seem to be of great antiquity. There are also ruins of a very splendid building to be seen on the plain at the foot of the mountain, hidden from the east. These buildings were built with huge pillars, many of which are still standing. Persians call the site "Cehlminâr," that is, "forty lighthouses." They call the pillars lighthouses because the pillars, with their buttresses, resemble the exterior of the towers Muhammedans commonly build next to their temples, to have people called together by an assistant who cries from the top, and also for lighting candles on festival nights.¹⁰⁰

In light of what Diodorus Siculus says about the sixth year of Alexander's reign, near the end, the admirable character of this building shows that it was once a part of that exalted and splendid palace of Cyrus, burnt by Alexander when he was urged to do so by Thais.¹⁰¹ But one does not see the mountains at a distance of 400 feet, as Diodorus said, for they are very near, almost connected to the site.¹⁰² Whether the palace that was once here was the site of a temple or a tomb one cannot easily judge, though I would prefer it to have been a temple.¹⁰³ The sculptures in particular seem ancient and have an appearance different from anything known in historical reports; in many places they are very numerous. They seem more likely to have adorned a temple than anything else, and appear to march past as if in a profession of sacrifice. There are numerous inscriptions, but one cannot learn anything from them, for their script is today unknown.¹⁰⁴ The form of some of them I have copied elsewhere, in my travel diary. One cannot learn anything from the histories of the Persians either, since their ancient script and manner of writing were completely lost after the Arabs came. The people of today have no information on ancient matters from the time of Cyrus, though they are rich in tales, uncertain and similar to the prattle of old women.

¹⁰⁰ Compare to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 2:378, 5:312.

¹⁰¹ See the same statement in Della Valle's letters to Schipano, where he adds it as a conclusion to information taken from Quintus Curtius. *Ibid.*, 5:310.

¹⁰² The same claim can be found in *ibid.*, 5:313, where Della Valle phrases it as a personal observation: "& moi je trouve que les ruines touchent immédiatement le pié de la montagne." The palace of Cyrus is, however, not touching the mountains, but other parts of the entire complex are near to them, while still at some distance. Thus, even if Della Valle's protest against Diodorus Siculus's statement would be interpreted as including these buildings too, it would lack force. It would be an interesting exercise to examine all of the Italian traveler's criticisms of ancient authors and see to what extent they are sustained by indisputable observations and information. Such a study may clarify to some extent Della Valle's attitudes towards ancient knowledge.

¹⁰³ Compare Della Valle's discussion of the interpretation of this palace in his letters to Schipano, where he also wrote that he would love it to be a temple, but offered some more alternatives of how to view the ruins and their former purpose. *Ibid.*, 5:314-19.

¹⁰⁴ In his letters to Schipano, Della Valle thought that the letters of one of the inscriptions resembled Hebrew letters and that each one of them might represent an entire word. *Ibid.*, 5:319-20.

The town closest to the ruins, half a mile away, is Mehr-chuascon, the meaning of whose name is unclear. After Sciraz, the more noble cities of Persia today are Lar (unless we prefer to reckon it to Caramania), Darabgerd, and Passa. Lar is not far from the border with Moghostàn, and was once the seat of a kingdom, until it was occupied by King Abbas a few years ago. Darabgerd the Persians think was built by Darius, whom they call Darab;¹⁰⁵ today there are few inhabitants. Passa is pronounced locally with a P, but Fassa would be better, according to current orthography (in Arabic script; for, as I have said, the Arabs do not have the letter P, and tend to replace it with F or Ph). Phassa or Passa lies between Sciraz and Lar, somewhat to the east, on a well-maintained road commonly used in winter to bypass the snow-covered mountains.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of its name, one should not have a low opinion of the town; it occupies a graceful site, abundant in fruit of all kinds, and is also memorable because of the ancient Passagardarum; residues of this name still survive. Also worth mentioning is a cypress of great age and size, regarded as holy by local people and religious folk. Five men with arms outstretched can barely manage to encircle its trunk; the longer branches extend out from the trunk about fifteen paces.

For many important aspects of the region of Farsistan I have neither the testimony of my own eyes nor information from others. One point that deserves mention is that many towns are now inhabited by Georgian and Circassian Christians, after their settlements had been destroyed by King Abbas. To keep them from returning to their own places far away they have been re-settled here as well as in Mazanderàn. These people, mostly commoners, still follow their inherited religion, albeit in a dull way, due to the ignorance of the priests who guide them. Encouraged by the king, however, the nobles among them, and many of the better sort of people, adopt the errors of the Muhammedans, for want of proper shepherds.

Lor or Loristàn is without doubt the ancient region of the Uxiors, inhabitants of the high mountains between Susiana and Persia. The word Lor can have many meanings, the best being lamb and mountain torrent. Both fit this people well, for they inhabit an area well watered by mountain torrents and rivers, and they surely keep many flocks of lamb and sheep. This region adjoins Fars to the east, Chuz in the west, Araq in the north (namely, the province of Hamadàn), and to the south, I think, the Persian Gulf, albeit not directly. There are no excellent cities, but some towns notable more for the number of inhabitants than for their buildings. Still, they like to come out and roam about in tents, together with their flocks in the pasture. The people here are savage,

¹⁰⁵ Compare to *ibid.*, 5:358.

¹⁰⁶ The same discussion about the town's orthography is found in *ibid.*, 5:351. The manuscript has the correct order as given here, the edition replaced P with F and vice versa. See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 300.

having adhered to the sect of Muhammed only a few years ago, guided mainly by the conversion of their neighbors. That is why they do not yet closely follow its teachings. They bear servitude badly, and hate the empire of King Abbàs. But since no living man dares to introduce changes, they bear their lot unwillingly. They may perhaps shake off the yoke after the king's death,¹⁰⁷ if someone puts the idea into souls already prepared for it.

The last region of the Persian empire is Chuz or Chuzistàn—the ancient Susiana, or one of its parts. (I did not investigate the meaning of the current name.)¹⁰⁸ Its capital today is the city of Sciusetèr; contrary to what some would say,¹⁰⁹ the ancient Susa was not this city but another called Sciuscèn (meaning a multitude of lilies), as is often mentioned in the ancient histories of the Persians. Whether Sciuscèn still exists today I do not know, but I assume it was not the same as Sciusetèr.¹¹⁰

Chuzistàn is bounded in the north by the Kurds, in the east by Araq and part of Persia, if I am not mistaken, and in the west by the southern limits of Babylonia. In the south it is bordered mainly by Loristan, but also by the Persian Gulf, and by the part of Babylonia that lies east of the Tigris. There is a city in this part of Babylonia, doubtless Haveiza, that is the residence of a free prince of the Arabs; the surrounding land is cultivated by Christian Arabs and by Christian Chaldeans from the sect of the Sabaeans.¹¹¹ They use either

¹⁰⁷ For our translation of “mortuo” as (his), i.e. Shah Abbas's, death, see Otto Güthling, *Langenscheidts Grosswörterbuch Latein: Teil II, Deutsch0Latein*, 16th ed., (Berlin, 1993), 585.

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of the possible origins of the name see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_of_the_name_Khuzestan.

¹⁰⁹ Della Valle wants to say here that some authors in Christian Europe believed that Shushtar was the place where the ancient capital of Susiana had been located.

¹¹⁰ This passage indicates more clearly than other parts of Della Valle's text that the author relied more than admitted on Persian (and Arabic) written sources. It also shows that he did not take the trouble to verify all the bits of information he chose to transmit, even if they concerned comparatively important points such as the location of ancient Susa.

¹¹¹ In his letters to Schipano, Della Valle wrote that these Christian Chaldaeans were called St. John's Christians by the Portuguese, who knew all these countries better than anybody else, while some Western European authors called them Sabeans after a certain heretic called Saba. They themselves said they were “Menadi,” i.e. Mandaeans. Della Valle also reported that they cooperated closely with the Portuguese against the Safavids and participated as soldiers in manning and defending the Portuguese fortress of Hormuz. See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 3:343, 6:64-65. On the identification of the obscure Sabaeans with Christian Mandaeans, see also Kurt Rudolph, *Der Mandäische “Dīwan der Flüsse”* (Berlin, 1982), 5-7. As for the rulers of Huweiza, Della Valle is here remarkably brief and obscure, in contrast to his more elaborate description in the letters to Schipano. The province was ruled by a *vali* who was a *sayyid*. That is why the *Tadhkirat al-muluk* declared him to be the most esteemed one among the lords of the marches. For the origins and fortunes of the Musha'sha' dynasty, see W. Caskel, “Ein Mahdi des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Islamica* 4 (1931): 415-22. The area the dynasty governed was called Arabistan after Shah Abbas affiliated it in a stable manner with the Safavid

the Chaldean or the Arabic language, but when writing they use a script very different from Arabic or Chaldean. They inhabit many cities of the region of Susiana, especially the area of Kiumalava, adjoining the city of Haveiza.¹¹¹ In my view, both cities are properly ascribed to the Chaldean or Babylonian region, where I started and I now terminate my circular description of all of Agiamia.

These are the regions currently subject to the Persian empire. The proper name for them is Agiamia (or Eiran or Eiron, as the Persians say it, if one includes all the lands stretching from the Euphrates to the river Oxus). Their common language is that of the Persians, though there are everywhere people who speak Turkish. This tongue was introduced to Agiamia by the Qizilbascis, when they subjugated it to their rule.

Once the former line of Turkish kings was extinguished, it took many years for Ismail, the first king of the dynasty ruling now, to conquer the empire, using these Turkish soldiers.¹¹³ Ismail was called with the epithet Sophi, the pious, because he adhered to a pious way of life. He was a descendant of the ancient Arabs, from the lineage of that Sciah Sophi, a man in their view not just pious but holy, whom I mentioned in the beginning. As a mark of the new religion, the head-band was folded into a turban with twelve protruding points, in honor of the twelve pontiffs of their sect. Ismail allowed soldiers supporting him to dress as he did.¹¹⁴ The Turkish soldiers were later called by the Turkish word Qizilbasci, that is, red heads.¹¹⁵ Having built the empire, they retained the right to bear arms and to administer the realm. In our day, however, King Abbas has set above them a new troop of his servants, for keeping down the haughty Qizilbascis, who contended among themselves immoderately. These new soldiers have been brought from other territories, either in Agiamia or elsewhere. They are mostly sons of Christians, trained from childhood as royal slaves, to be incorporated into a troop separate from that of the Qizilbascis. It is said their number has now reached 30,000. Like the Qizilbascis, many of them also participate in the governance of the realm, and have risen to the highest offices and satrapies. Abbas attached to them companies of true Persians, who are called Tat, that is, defenseless subjects. The king uses these Persian troops for campaigns that require irregulars or a supporting militia, but he also

Empire in 1000 h/1590. As a consequence, the traditional name of Chuzistan lost its validity for the southern part of its former territory. See *ibid.*, 416, n. 1.

¹¹² Della Valle's spelling of "Haveiza" differs from the customary Arabic one, which is "Huwaiza." With regard to the second name's spelling, Della Valle follows the pronunciation of Mandaeen inhabitants of the place whom he met in Southern Iran. Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:64.

¹¹³ We follow the manuscript, which has "ope," not "opera" as the edition. See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 301.

¹¹⁴ We follow the manuscript, which has "faventibus ipsi," while the edition has "ferventibus ipsis." See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 301.

¹¹⁵ Compare Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 2:392.

employs them for the governance of the realm, for from their ranks come most of those who occupy themselves with justice, taxes, the governance of the people, and other civil services.¹¹⁶

Thus apart from the royal family one may say that the forces of the Persian empire are threefold: the Qizilbascis, the Persians, and one other, rather large contingent of servants of foreign origin. Since most of the latter are Georgians, mostly adults from noble families, recently come to Persia, they can never forget their homeland and its fall, despite their conversion to the sect of Muhammed. They cannot forget either the indigenous Georgian princes who survive, many of whom are now in Persia, as I have said. Many of these Georgians rue what they have done. That is why it is not possible to predict the future course of events. With what warlike games and tournaments of the nobles will they celebrate the rites for King Abbas in Persia, where tragic spectacles are never absent from royal funerals? And what can be hoped from his successor? For among the sons of Abbas there remains today only a single heir (the others have been killed, or blinded, or being too young). He is an adolescent, called Imam Culi Mirzà, who has never tried his hand in any of the affairs of state.

One might easily judge from the fate of the Mamluks in Egypt. The country of the Mamluks did not touch Egypt, as Georgia touches Agiamia, for it was far away, the entire width of Asia lying between them. Also, because the Mamluks were brought to Egypt as little children sold for money—hence they were called Mamluks, people taken into possession, or slaves—they did not even know their parents. They were not so fortunate as to have nearby princes of their own, or men from the nobility of their race, or any other aid or advantage—unlike the Georgians in Persia (there are three Christian princes of their nation still ruling in Georgia and on the borders of Agiamia). Unfortunately, due to a certain inborn flippancy of spirit, and an excessive simplicity, the Georgians are wanting in concord, and in leadership. But if they ever take over the empire of the Persians—which might easily happen—what is to be expected? Will Agiamia's future rulers be Christians? Or, having slavishly surrendered to the perfidy they have adopted, will they follow the example of the Mamluks, who though Circassian and Christian in origin, in Egypt always remained adherents of the Muhammedan perfidy?¹¹⁷ I know for sure that those who are once

¹¹⁶ In his letters to Schipano, Della Valle claimed that Tat was the name of the true descendants of the ancient Persians. He also pretended that Abbas as a rule took from the Tat his viziers, secretaries, and all other officers of the civil administration, adding that the Tat alone served as artillery soldiers and that this new weaponry had been introduced upon the insistence of the Englishman Anthony Shirley. Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:92-93, 105. This is, however, at best an exaggeration, as the Tat were only one of the Persian tribes in the Safavid Empire.

¹¹⁷ Compare Della Valle's musings about this subject in his letters to Schipano, where he already introduced the comparison between the Georgians in the Safavid Empire and the Egyptian Mamluks and expressed his hopes that the Georgians would take over power in Persia as the Mamluks did in Egypt. Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*,

taken with the Muhammedan plague never regain their health. From what I have said already, and from innumerable other examples, I have learned that this perfidious sect possesses some simplistic enticement, so that those who have once completely submitted to it never abandon it again.

But the number of those who have not forsaken the Christian religion is very high, in particular among people of lower station, as I have said. I doubt not that they will persevere, if things proceed well. For experience teaches that people living among infidels—although sometimes oppressed by severe troubles—nevertheless keep the faith and do not forsake it—this I have seen myself. If necessary, they suffer danger to their bodies rather than to apostatize. One example of admirable perseverance and steadfast piety, above all others among the Georgians of today, is that of the glorious heroine I have already mentioned, queen Ketevàn, mother of the prince Teimuràz, who is held hostage in the city of Sciràz.¹¹⁸

After their kingdom was lost, the family was led into captivity, the son was beaten and fled; the grandsons, still children, were taken prisoner with their grandmother, and educated in Muhammedan rites, far from her sight, though in the same city. Even today, because of the indulgence of the Persians and her own people, who did not wish to torment her already desperate soul with news of such a cruel and infamous deed, she does not know that these children have been made into eunuchs.¹¹⁹ When her kinsman, Prince Luarsàb, had been killed in captivity, while she herself was detained, honorably, but distrusted and under careful observation, she suffered her troubles with no less courage than before. Previously, fortune had extinguished the life of her kinsman Constantine an infidel and a murderer, together with the lives of many Persian soldiers supporting him (Constantine had made war on the queen and her son). Later, however, in the face of inimical fate, she was ready to die in order to save her own endangered people. Subsequently, in order to appease her conqueror, the angry king of the Persians, she turned her face into the danger, of her own free will surrendering herself to him, with her grandsons and daughters; this she did in hopes of securing peace.¹²⁰

4:71. In contrast to Della Valle's hope, the Georgians defended the Safavid dynasty until it was overthrown by the Afghans in the eighteenth century.

¹¹⁸ Originally, after Ketevàn in the manuscript, Della Valle had written (but then crossed out): "Ketevàn Dedupalì, that is, the queen called Ketevàn as they themselves say." The edition kept this cancelled part. See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 302. For Della Valle's descriptions of her captivity on the basis of reports by her Georgian retainer and by Mariuccia Tiyatin de Ziba, a young Georgian lady and Della Valle's later second wife, see Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:74-75, 108, 109-14.

¹¹⁹ Compare to Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:74.

¹²⁰ According to Salia, Ketevan did not deliver herself voluntarily as a hostage; rather, Abbas demanded from Teimuraz that the queen and others of the family become hostages as part and parcel of the negotiations on surrender. Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, 291-92. Della Valle knew that Ketevan did not go voluntarily to Abbas since in his

Nevertheless, peace was not achieved and she never won her freedom back, but was sent as a prisoner, as I said, into the far away Persia; there—while I was there, in 1622—she had to abstain from the mysteries of the Christian faith, because ministers of the holy rites were not available. But she always had at her disposal a small chapel, adorned with holy icons, burning wax candles, sweet incense, and precious vessels. Piously she visited it regularly with her entire household. She confessed publicly and firmly her faith in Jesus Christ. She observed as best as possible the rites of the religion in her rooms, and did so with such piety of soul that she did not want to allow any of the implements of prayer—for example, the vestments, icons, books, and such things—to come into the hands of the Muhammedans; for of late, many such things had been brought as part of the booty from Hormuz. She did not want to allow by any means that such things should be desecrated by the infidels. On the contrary, in a small holy house of the Lord in her own residence, as I have said, she arranged all things properly and with great reverence, once they had come into her possession, either as gifts from nobles among her own people, many of whom greatly favored her, or because she had ransomed them from others.¹²¹ I can testify to this myself. Two books for religious use, namely a Latin breviary and a small book written in Portuguese for the Holy Sacraments, were saved by her from the hands of the plunderers of Hormuz, and given to me later as a gift in Sciraz (where I stayed for a short time), because they were in our language.¹²² I keep them with me like precious gemstones as a memory of this most eminent queen and most excellent lady. That is why no one should fail to be aware that friends are needed, and many of them, to help protect and secure in this situation the Christian faith, particularly that of the Georgians in Persia, which is doubtless close to decay. Since such helpers are lacking today—for there are but a few friars of the Augustinian order and the Discalced Carmelites, living only in Sphahan and Sciraz and doing exquisite work, but surely too few for such an important harvest—why do the Jesuit fathers not hurry hither? This work is their destiny, and they have wandered through almost every region that is accessible; let them come to Georgia, which has so far had no help from us, and to this huge realm of Persia, to bring aid to a small but zealous group of people fighting for our faith? Finally, why do they

letters to Schipano he wrote: “Di far guerra occasione alcuna non vi era, perchè Teimuraz era amico e faceva nel resto ogni ossequio possibile, come si vide, avendo mandato ultimamente a questo re, per placarlo, quando si faceva la guerra più atroce, infin la madre e due figliuoli, che stanno ora ritenuti in Sciraz. . . .” Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle*, 1:663.

¹²¹ See Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:75.

¹²² Della Valle implies here that he met Ketevan himself, but this was not the case as his letters to Schipano prove. The two books he mentions here he did not receive directly from Ketevan, but through her retainer. Della Valle, *Voyages de Pietro della Vallé*, 4:79, 109-14.

not penetrate into Asia, into Muhammed's empire, as they have begun work in Constantinople and in the empire of the Moghol and perhaps elsewhere?

You, my revered father Vincislaus, be zealously strengthened in your most holy and pious purpose of working to increase and multiply the Christian religion, a purpose we share with you; good-bye, and keep us ever in your memory.

Petrus A Valle Peregrinus

Given at Goa, in the capital of the Portuguese in India, in the month of February, in the year of the Lord 1624.

The polar altitude of certain cities in Agiamia which has been differently observed—as will become obvious in the table written down below—by different [people] during my time, namely by Don Garçia a Silva et Figueroa, the ambassador of the Catholic king in Persia, the Scott Georgius Strachan, an educated man, Mullà Zeineddin from Lar, the best astrologer and finally by myself, Pietro della Valle.

	D. Garçia	Georgius Strachan	Mullà Zeineddin	Petrus a Valle
Cehl-minâr	28°56'			
Kasciân	32°34'			
Kombrù, vel				
Abbassi portus				26°58'18"25" ¹²³
Lar	27°		27°30'	27°17'1"10"
Minâ				26°35'2"
Qazvîn	35°28'	36°40' ¹²⁴		
Qom		33°4'		
Savâ		33°18'		
Scirâz	28°44'			
Sphahân, sive				
Ispahân	31°30'	32°40'		32°23'56"
Sultania	35°57'			

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¹²³ As it appears in the manuscript. The edited text has 26°52'18"25". See Della Valle, *De recentiori imperio Persarum subiectis regionibus*, 303.

¹²⁴ As it appears in the manuscript. The edited text has 26°40'. Ibid., 303.

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