

Two Faces of Power in the Political Discourse of the Safavid Era

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Abstract

From different perspective, the Safavid dynasty seems to have held an important position in the history of political developments in Iran. Among all the factors contributing to the establishment and consolidation of the Safavid government, the modern concept of discourse shift has great significance. This discourse shift, however, did not take place overnight; rather, a number of background factors as well as some measures taken by the Safavid kings helped the formation and consolidation of this political and identity discourse of the Safavid government. Using a discourse analysis method, the present study thus investigated the strategies the Safavid government adopted to stabilize and institutionalize its discourse. To make their discourse dominant, the research findings revealed, the Safavids took advantage of both a disciplinary face (macrophysics) as well as the micro face of power (microphysics). They gradually chose to stay away from the hard and material power and assumed cultural, spiritual, and soft hegemony. It was also found that among the Safavid kings, Shah Isma'il represented the hard face of power and Shah Tahmaseb was credited with being the first to use the soft face of power for the stabilization of the Safavid political discourse.

Keywords: Safavid, political discourse, hard power, soft power, hegemony.

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