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**Research Paper**

**The Territory of Iran in the Late Safavid Dynasty according to Gilles Robert de Vaugondy and Didier de Vaugondy's Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte  
(The First Half of the 12th Century AH/ 18th Century CE)**

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**Abstract**

Historical maps are one of the most important sources for studying the historical geography of lands, borders of dynasties and territories, historical names and border changes. also, by studying historical maps, one can discover the geographical vision and view of people throughout the centuries and in different societies, and in this way achieve a correct understanding of concepts such as the world, geography, territorial boundaries and things like these. on the other hand, the researcher of Iranian history, especially the researcher of the Safavid era, is bound to refer to various maps that have been drawn about the geographical boundaries of Iran. by studying the elements and data included in the historical maps, one can get a visual understanding of the borders of Iran's territory and the correct recording of specific geographical names. the map of the "Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie : Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte" was drawn in the first half of the 12th century AH/18th CE by the efforts of two of the most prominent European cartographers of that era, namely Gilles Robert de Vaugondy and his son Didier Robert de Vaugondy. Vaugondies were prominent cartographers in the 17th and 18th centuries whose scientific activities were largely acknowledged in the French court and across Europe, and European rulers tended to acquire maps and geographical globes developed by the Vaugondies. Now the question is, how did a European cartographer describe the geographical area of Iran in the early 18th century? Did he look at the territory of Iran from a dynastic lens or did he consider it as a whole unit? Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach and qualitative methodology, the present study strives to outline the domain of Iran in the late Safavid period based on the information provided on the map drawn by Gilles Robert de Vaugondy and Didier de Vaugondy. Analysis of obtained data unveils that Vaugondy, alike his contemporaries, regarded Iran as a unit and distinct geography. The image that he provided of the boundary of Iran also aligns with Persian texts of the given era.

**Keywords:** Historical Geography; Territory of Iran; Map; the Safavids; Gilles Robert de Vaugondy.

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## 1. Introduction

Historical maps are primary sources in historical studies. Using the data on historical maps is an important step towards a clear understanding of boundaries of political territories, the name given to nations, cities and countries and trade routes or other human phenomenon over time. On the other hand, historical maps reflect social, cultural, cosmological, and religious mindsets and premises of people through the ages. Analyzing visual components on the maps provides history researchers with abundant historical and social data which are not found in written sources and historical accounts. Thus it highlights the importance of historical maps in research.

One of the characteristics of Iranian history during the Safavid period is the existence of a large amount of European sources for the study of Iran; Of course, the aforementioned sources are not necessarily limited to travelogues and written texts and include a wide range of sources. Historical maps provided by world explorers, or drawn by European cartographers are amongst valuable sources that comprise of geographical and historical data as well as visual components. The survey of such maps evolution indicates that in the first phase (more precisely, up until the late tenth century AH/ sixteenth century CE) map cartographers drew the boundary of Iran on account of Greek and Roman writings. In this respect, they mainly relied on classical texts to retrieve data such as the historical boundaries of Iran and proper names in order to include them in their maps. Since the eleventh century AH/ seventeenth century CE, however, this process was largely transformed and cartographers widely drew on existing reality. They, for instance, benefited from texts written by explorers, diplomats, and visitors to Iran, which is the reason why European maps turned to be more concrete and factual. In early twelfth century AH/ eighteenth century CE coincident with the fall of Isfahan (1135 AH) and the disappearance of Safavid empire (1148 AH), Europeans obtained detailed and precise data from the natural and political geography of Iran to develop their maps, which consequently distanced from their primary approach—drawing on classical accounts.

One of the latest historical maps ‘Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecks, Arabie et Egypte’ drawn by Gilles

Robert de Vaugondy and Didier de Vaugondy—which the present paper hopes to explicate and compare its data with Persian sources—appeared about the fall of the Safavid dynasty and the rise of the Afsharid in Iran. The data included in this map, i.e., outlining borders and proper names, is quite fascinating and offers a parallel to the Persian sources of the time. The necessity of using historical maps to study the history of the Safavid period (907-1148 AH) is necessary because for the Safavid period, important geographical texts written in Persian language are very limited and only a few short treatises such as Rāzī’s *Tadhkarah-yi Haft Iqlīm*, Bāfqī’s *Mukhtaṣar Mufīd*, Mīrzā Samī‘ā’s *Tadhkarah al-Mulūk*, and Mīrzā Rafī‘ā’s *Dastūr al-Mulūk* are available. Such like writings, moreover, are not particularly considered as geographical treatises.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, history researchers inevitably consult historical maps and compares the data provided in such maps with those of in texts.

## 2. Gilles Robert de Vaugondy (1766-1688 CE): Biography, and Geographical Activities

Gilles Robert Vaugondy was born in Paris in 1688 in the famous Vaugondy family. This family was originally engaged in the profession of cartography, and the great ancestor of Gilles Robert named Nicolas Sanson (1600-1667 CE) was the official cartographer of the court of Louis XIV of France (r. 1715-1643 CE). Robert de Vaugondy who was also trained in such an atmosphere, soon began to carry out cartography. During his life, which corresponded to Europeans’ geographical discoveries, French emperors passionately supported cartographers and discoverers, which is the most likely reason why Vaugondy was encouraged to produce the renowned *Atlas Universel*. Compiling findings of precedent geographers and his observations, Vaugondy, in 1757 CE, drew the large *Atlas Universel* which was among the significant and authentic historical atlases of the eighteenth century in Europe. This *Atlas*, which is a masterpiece in its own kind, includes the map of many known lands of that time.

Didier de Vaugondy assisted his father Gilles de Vaugondy in drawing geographical maps. Didier de Vaugondy was taught and trained the fundamentals of geography and he also accompanied Gilles in scientific and discovery journeys. Gilles Vaugondy's genius

and the high reputation of his *Atlas Universel* caused King Louis XV of France (r. 1715-1774) to choose him as a court geographer and cartographer in 1760 CE. Since 1760 CE to his demise 1766 CE, Gilles attended Paris and produced deluxe maps and unique geography globes for the scientific centers based in Paris and French nobles. Didier took up his father's activities after Gilles died. He was also nominated as the official geographer and cartographer by rulers like Louis XV who was the king of France at the time, and Stanisław I Leszczyński (d. 1766), the King of Poland-Lithuania and Duke of Lorraine. Didier played a remarkable role in geographical activities at scientific centers in Paris. Amongst his works, there are two deluxe and valuable geographical globes displayed at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Chartres.<sup>ii</sup>

### 3. The Boundary of Iran based on 'Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte'

'Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte' was produced by Gilles Robert de Vaugondy and his son Didier de Vaugondy in the first half of the eighteenth century CE, more likely in the thirties or forties coincident with the collapse of the Safavid dynasty (1146 AH), and the rise of Nādir Shāh Afshār (r. 1148-1160 AH) in Iran.

As the title of this map suggests, the Vaugondy did not aim at describing boundaries of a particular dynasty. Similar to his many other works, however, he described territorial and historical boundaries.<sup>iii</sup> One of the available editions of 'Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte' is preserved at the repository of Geography and Map Division in the Library of Congress in the United States, Washington.<sup>iv</sup> The data is shown in the following table, and the territory of Iran is further explained according to the map.

**Table 1 Details- 'Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte' at the repository of Geography and Map Division in the Library of Congress in the United States, Washington**

| Components     | Details   |
|----------------|---|
| Title          | Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie : Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte              |
| Cartographer   | Gilles de Robert Vaugondy (1688-1766 CE)  |
| Produced in    | Paris. 1730-1749 CE   |
| Size           | 54*47 CM  |
| Repository     | Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington                                       |
| Code           | 2013593001  |
| LCCN link      | <a href="https://lccn.loc.gov/2013593001">https://lccn.loc.gov/2013593001</a>                     |
| Retrieval link | <a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g7420.ct003760">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g7420.ct003760</a> |



**Figure 1**Map- 'Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte' at the repository of Geography and Map Division in the Library of Congress in the United States, Washington; code 2013593001

The yellow line shows the territorial boundary of Iran, the red one illustrates the borders of the Ottoman Empire-Egypt close to Iran, the solid green one demonstrates the Arabian Peninsula, and the Uzbek Khanate appears in the faded lines (or brown in some editions). It is notable that the colors highlight the independent domain of Iran and its independent political sovereignty in so much that Egypt – despite its different title – has been part of the Ottoman Empire which is shown in red. In other words, yellow lines indicate borders of Iran, its independent political sovereignty, and historical territory. As of title, alike the Greek tradition, ‘Perse’ is used for Iran. (See Chardin, 1372 HS: 4/1369-1370). Graphics drawn in margins are also significant for map analysis as they are in accord with geographical domains and reflect Europeans’ mindset. Depicted in either marginal sides of given map, there are two ‘Eastern men’ wearing Muslims custom and pipe with an incense holder and a book. Looking at this graphic, European visitors would certainly envision the East which is in accordance with the content of this map i.e., the contemporary Middle East.

Apart from visual aspects of the present map, the northwest borders of Iran comprises of eastern Georgia (Kartli and Kakheti), and Yerevan (contemporary Armenia), while Shirvan is also part of the northwest border of Iran. Yerevan is also considered as a part of the great Armenia in the given map. Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Shamakhi were the capitals, respectively. Uch kilisā or Etchmiadzin Cathedral is in the west of Yerevan, surrounded by its *Qasabas* as the border of Iran-Ottoman Empire. Lore in Georgia, Barda and Ganja in Arrān and Bāku, Abscharon and Darband in Shirvan are some of the important cities within such regions marked on the map. Kartli and Kakheti were amongst the four Iranian territories where *wālīs* inhabited (Mīrzā Samī‘ā, 1378: 4-5). In Georgia, *wālīs* had much credit in the structure of Safavid government (Anṣārī, 1385 HS: 184). At this time, some key designations, including office of *Dārūghah* in Iṣfahān and (often) *Sipahsālāri* in Iran were entrusted to *wālīs* and their relatives in Georgia. Petitions and letters written by *wālīs* of Arabistān (the western part of Khawzistān) and Georgia (Kartli and Kakheti), moreover, were entrusted to I‘timād al-Dawlah, minister of the

Supreme Court (*Dīwān-i A‘lā*) (Ibid., 188. Also compare with Mustawfī Bāfiqī, 1390 HS: 347-357).

Apart from Georgia, which was defined by the Safavid government court as a residential place for *wālīs*, other lands of Caucasus were controlled by *Bīglarbīgīs* which took the second place after *wālīs*. In his *Dastūr al-Mulūk*, Mīrzā Rafī‘ā mentions that among thirteen *Bīglarbīgīs* in Iran, three ruled around Shirwan, Chokhūr-i Sa‘d and Karabakh-Ganja (Anṣārī, 1385 HS: 186; Mīrzā Samī‘ā, 1378 HS: 5). Also, according to the same treatise, the contents of *Shamkhāl*, the ruler of Dāghistān, and Usmi, which was also an official title in Dāghistān, belonged to the *Qūrchībāshī* of the central Safavid court (Ibid., 190). It can be obtained from this report that the Safavid territory extended to the northern high lands of Caucasus and the Safavids had some indirect influence among the *Shamkhāls* of Dāghistān. Despite this, Vaugondy has not considered Dāghistān a part of Iranian territory. It is can be regarded that the sovereignty of the Safavids was limited around Dāghistān. As Adam Olearius notes, neither Iranians nor Russians were able to have direct influence in Dāghistān region (Olearius, 1363 HS: 366, 368). In fact, the entire plains of the North Caucasus were the land of nomadic tribes and mountaineers who constantly threatened urban and rural centers of the South Caucasus, and strong historic castles such as Darband was one of the earliest strategies of Iranian rulers to prevent northern invaders.

Aras (Araxes) river is naturally and historically the border between Ādharbāyijān in the south and Arrān, Shirwān, Gushtāsfī, Georgia, and Armenia in the north (Lestrange, 1377 HS: 190). According to the details provided on Vaugondy’s map, Ādharbāyijān, which is here mentioned Adirbeitzan, is also in the south of Aras. Urmia and Van lakes in the western part of this region indicate the Western border of Iran and the Ottoman. Looking carefully at the territory of Ādharbāyijān, it is evident that *Dār al-Saltānah* of Tabrīz has been the center of this province (Kaempfer, 1360 HS: 158). Marāghah, Urmia, Ardabil, Khuy and Sarāb were among other important cities of Ādharbāyijān. Khuy and Sarāb were later considered as the center of Dunbulī and Shaqāqī confederations, playing a significant role in developments of Iran and Ādharbāyijān.

Ādharbāyijān, centered in Tabrīz, was one of the thirteen *Bīglarbīgī* settlements of Iran during the Safavid era (Anṣārī, 1385 HS: 186; Mīrz Samī'ā, 1378 HS: 5). And for some reasons, such as the existence of a *Khāngāh* and tomb of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn and its vicinity to the Ottomans borders, it was considerably important.<sup>v</sup>

The large state in the south of Ādharbāyijān is named Iraki Agemi.<sup>vi</sup> According to Vaugondy's map, major cities in of Persian 'Iraq are Hamadān, Sulṭānāh, Qazwīn, Ray, Iṣfahān, Qum, Kāshān, Burūjird, and Tihṛān. It is worthy of note that Tihṛān is one of the important centers of Persian 'Iraq. In fact, Tihṛān has gained such prominence in the first half of the twelfth century AH/eighteenth century CE that Vaugondy has mentioned that as one of the major cities of Persian 'Iraq. Then although Luristān is a part of Persian 'Iraq, it has been specially referred to as Laurestan. This is likely because Luristān was one of the four *Wilāyats* (where *wālīs* inhabited) of the Safavid territory. Persian 'Iraq was the western border of Iran-Ottoman Empire. Following the Treaty of Zuhāb (Qaṣr-i Shīrīn) in 1049 AH, borders of Iran-Ottoman were established, and the 'Arabs 'Iraq (Sawād), Jazīra and parts of Kurdistān and Diyārbakr were also of the Ottoman empire (Lockhart, 1380 HS: 20-21). Vaugondy has also considered Kurdistān as a part of the Ottoman Empire across the borders of Iran; though a large part of Kurdistān region belonged to Iran and it was one of the four habitations of *wālīs* during the Safavid dynasty. *Wālīs* in Luristān and Kurdistān latently exercised the authority across the western borders, and though they are considered *Bīglarbīgīs* in *Dastūr al-Mulūk* treatise and this might indicate the Safavid's intention to weaken the status of *wālīs* in Luristān and Kurdistān, yet alike other *wālīs* (in Georgia and 'Arabistān) they exercised the authority (Anṣārī, 1385 HS: 183, 184-185).

The Persian 'Iraq was significant given the two courts of the Safavids were in Qazwīn and Iṣfahān (Kaempfer, 1360 HS: 158). In fact, many cities of this region were not under the authority of *Bīglarbīgīs* considering that they were in farther distance from borders but in the vicinity of royal courts. In the final years of the Safavid dynasty, and simultaneous with the increasing interest of the Safavid *Shāhs* to transform the lands under their control into

“Arādī-i khāṣṣah”, they were considered part of the khāṣṣah lands (Rohrborn, 2537: 10). Among thirteen *Bīglarbīgīs* of Iran mentioned in his *Dastūr al-Mulūk*, Mīrzā Rafī'ā considers two territories of 'Alīshukr/'Alīshikar (Hamadān) and *Dār al-Salṭanah* of Qazwīn as a part of Persian 'Iraq (Anṣārī, 1385 HS: 186). However, as Mīrzā Rafī'ā has emphasized, and there are implications in some of the European travel writings of the Safavid dynasty, *Dār al-Salṭanah* of Qazwīn has been an inhabitation of *Bīglarbīgī* and it has been already controlled by a *wazīr*, *dārūghah*, *kalāntar* and *mustawfī* (Ibid.; Olearius, 1363 HS:151).

In the south western ends of Persian 'Iraq, Kusistan (or Khawzistān) is observed. The western parts of this region (known as 'Arabistān) was one of the four inhabitations of *wālīs* in Iran during the Safavid dynasty and members of Musha'sha'ī dynasty were authorities (Bosworth, 1381 HS: 527-529). Rohrborn has perfectly noted that the Musha'sha'īds dominated Khawzistān up until the beginning of the tenth century AH and by their defeat against Shāh Ismā'īl-i Ṣafawī (907-930 AH) their territory was limited to Huwayzah and cities such as Shūshtar and Didhful were ruled by the Safavids (Rohrborn, 2537: 118). Thus, accordingly Khawzistān and 'Arabistān in Safavid texts are justifiable. In any case, as noted in *Dastūr al-Mulūk*, *wālīs* who belonged to Musha'sha'īds in 'Arabistān were superior to others in terms of *Siyādat*, *Nijābat*, *Islām Pazīrī* [adherence to Islam], and *Ziyādī-yi īl u 'ashīrat* [abundance of clans and tribes] (Anṣārī, 1385 HS:182; Mīrz Samī'ā, 1378 HS: 4). Based on the details presented on Vaugondy's map, cities like Ahwāz, Jundīshāpūr, Tustar (Shūshtar), and Rāmhurmuz were the centers of Khawzistān. Besides, the border between Khawzistān and the Ottoman Empire was Arwand Rūd or Shatt Al 'Arab- as Vaugondy names. Arwand Rūd passed through the land and discharged into the Persian Gulf and 'Persian Gulf' is an ancient and original term. Looking closely at the map, it is observed that the French cartographer has used Golfe Persique (i.e., Persian Gulf) for this vast gulf.

In any case, Shirwān, Georgia, Yerevan/ Armenia, Ādharbāyijān, the 'Iraq-i 'Ajam, Kurdistān, Luristān, and Khawzistān formed the western borders of Iran-Ottoman Empire. And the reason why *wālīs* settled across this



long border was reoccurring disputes of the two governments in the tenth and eleventh centuries AH/sixteenth and seventeenth centuries CE. The last point about the territories of *wālīs* in the Safavid territory concerns attempts of the central government to impose influence on such regions, and it should not be presumed that such lands have been independent political centers across the borders of Iran. For example, Mirza Rafi'a mentions the *Kutwāls* and castellans of Muḥsinīyah and Tiblisi castles in 'Arabistān and Georgia, which the central Safavid court sent to those areas and in this way tried to have a base of influence for themselves in the mentioned provinces. (Anṣārī, 1385 HS:182, 184). It is hence perceived why Vaugondy did not consider any of the territories of *wālīs* as independent political units, and thus mentions them into the territory of Iran.

Based on the details on Vaugondy's map, the large state of Fārs is in the east of Khawzistān. Fārs was one of the southern provinces of Iran, and Vaugondy uses Farsistan for this region. As already stated, Fārs was a vast state and due to having suitable weather conditions for agriculture, large population and location in the north of the Persian Gulf, it was considered one of the richest states of Iran throughout history (Mustawfī Bāfiqī, 1390 HS: 305-331). On the shores of the Persian Gulf, Vaugondy has mentioned significant ports like Sīnīz, Daylam, Rīg, Būshīhr, Bandar 'Abbās, Sīrāf, and Hurmuz; however, there are numerous ports mentioned on the given map (Ibid., 363). Shīrāz was the center of Fārs during the Islamic period, and Vaugondy has also shown that as the capital of Fārs (Also see Kaempfer, 1360 HS: 157). Kāzīrūn and Fasā in the vicinity of Shīrāz are among important cities in Fārs. The emergence of a powerful ruler in Fārs led to the possibility that the provinces and peripheral regions of Fārs would also come under the rulership of Fārs. For instance, Shāh 'Abbās 'Abbās I (r. 996-1038 AH) entrusted Fārs and Kūhgīlūyah to Allāhwirdī Khān who together with his son Imāmquī Khān dominated Fārs and Kūhgīlūyah, but also the large region including Lār, Dūrq (Fallāhīah in present time), Hurmuz, and Baḥriyn. Even they annexed parts of such regions, like Baḥriyn, to the Safavid territory. Despite this, by the demise of Imāmquī Khān (d. 1042 AH/[1632 CE]), every mentioned

region was separately entrusted to a governor (Chardin, 1372 HS: 1369; Rohrborn, 2537: 13-14).

In the south of Fārs and adjacent to the coast of the Persian Gulf, Lāristān province was located, the center of which was the city of Lār. Lāristān was considerably prosperous given the Maritime commerce in the Persian Gulf during the Safavid era. Having been loaded in Lāristān and the Persian Gulf, commercial caravans embarked to the north, the Safavid court in Iṣfahān. This was the reason why cities between Iṣfahān, Fārs, and Lāristān were prosperous.<sup>vii</sup> It seems that at the end of the Safavid era, the Arabs of Masqaṭ, Oman, had disturbed the security of the Persian Gulf coast to some extent with their rebellions and attacks. The central court of Iṣfahān missioned Lutf'alī Khān-i Dāghistānī as the *Bīglarbīgī* of Fārs and Kūhgīlūyah and *Khān-i Lār* and Banādir (ports) to address threats by Arabs of Masqaṭ (Mar'ashī-i Ṣafawī, 1362 HS: 31). His nickname indicates the annexation of such regions as a united geographical unit.

Based on the details provided on Vaugondy's map, in the eastern ends of Fārs and Lāristān, are Lūt Desert and the Great Salt Desert, Kerman, Mecran (Makurān), Segestan (Sīstān), Sablestan (Zābulistān) and Candahar (Qandhār). According to the two treatises *Dastūr al-Mulūk* and *Tadhkarah al-Mulūk*, Candahar and Kerman were among the territories for *Bīglarbīgīs* during the Safavid era (Anṣārī, 1385 HS: 186; Mīrz Samī 'ā, 1378 HS: 5) And Zābulistān and Qandhār were the borders of Safavid Iran with Mughal empire of India. Though there was a friendly relationship between Iran and India throughout the Safavid era, but at times, there were tensions between two states to dominate Qandhār. Later, a number of Afghān rebellions led by Maḥmūd Ghilzāi departed to Iṣfahān and were able to capture this city in 1135 AH (Mustawfī, 1375 HS: 132-133). Despite this, the collapse of Iṣfahān in 1135 AH did not simply imply that the court of Iran had been conquered by foreign invaders, but they were the peasantry and citizens of the Safavids that followed Maḥmūd Ghilzāi on this expedition. Given its political and international status between Iran and India, Candahar played an important role at that time and it was also considered a major commercial center for Iran. As Adam Olearius writes, rich areas of Candahar paid customs duty, and other

costs around one million Thaler to the central court in the first half of the eleventh century AH/seventeenth century CE (Olearius, 1363 HS: 320). Chardin also notes that Multan has been the nearest city of Indians to Candahar and emphasizes that Multān has been a route for commerce between Indians and Iranians, prior to the emergence of Europeans maritime trade across the Persian Gulf (Chardin, 1372 HS: 4/1440).

In the north of Qandhār, the great province of Khurāsān was located, which has played a major role in the political and cultural history of Iran for a long time. At this time, the Great Khurāsān was the major part of the territory of Iran in the Safavid era, and it was a barrier against the Uzbeks and Turkomans who attacked. On his map, Vaugondy mentions three large states, Balck, Corasan, and Couhestan. As indicated on the given map, Fāryāb, Tāliqān, Maymanah, and Badakhshān are the major states of Balkh. Located on the coast of Oxus, Badakhshān was at Iran-Uzbeks of Transoxania border, which had well-built castles and fortresses. It is noteworthy that influence of the Safavids in Balkh and Badakhshān was not that influential and direct and basically the given region was once governed by the Safavids or the Uzbeks under certain circumstances. It is evidenced by Khātūn-ābādī that in 1082 AH two people, moved from the highlands of from Badakhshān, named Bāburīyah, to Mashhad and asked the *Mūtawallī* to send out two Shī'ī missionaries to the region. It was though ineffective, and the two people returned to Badakhshān (Khātūn-ābādī, 1352 HS: 531-532). However, from the content of the report, we can surmise that the political and religious influence of the Safavids in the highlands of Badakhshān and the southern coast of Oxus River was not very deep-rooted, though Khātūn-ābādī emphasizes that people of Iskandarīyah and Bāburīyah highlands had been Shī'ah (Ibid., 258).

Apart from Badakhshān and Balkh, most of the cities in Khurāsān including *Dār al-Salṭanah* of Harāt, had the same situation. Harāt, which was considered the most important city of Khurāsān at the beginning of the Safavid period, gradually lost its former importance until the end of the Safavid era, and Mashhad al-Riḍā became the largest city of Khurāsān due to its religious importance. Either of cities Harāt and Mashhad al-Riḍā were two

of the thirteen settlements for *Bīglarbīgīs* mentioned in *Dastūr al-Mulūk* and *Tadhkarah al-Mulūk* (Anṣārī, 1385 HS: 186; Mīrzā Samī'ā, 1378 HS: 5). Among other cities of Khurāsān are Marw, Nīshābūr, Marw al-Rūd, Sarakhs, Sabziwār, and Tūs. In northern Khurāsān, Tajan river spanned by the boundary of Iran and the Khanate of Khiva. It is noteworthy that Quhistān (*Kūhistān*, or highland) marked on Vaugondy's map is distinct from Quhistān in Khurāsān, centralized in Qā'in, Tūn, and Ṭabas. On this map, Quhistān includes Dāmghān, Qūmis, Gird Kūh spanning from the west to Riy and Persian 'Irāq, and Gurgān and Astar-ābād from the north, and ending in the east, Khurāsān.

The vast body of water Extended to the west and northwest of Khurāsān is titled Mer Caspienne on Vaugondy's map. Starting from the east coast of the Caspian Sea, the regions of Zaweh, Corcan, Astrabad, Taberistan, and Ghilan can be seen on the map. In these provinces, there was a thriving maritime trade between the southern parts of Russia and Poland-Lithuania, and this factor caused the economic prosperity of the southern and western shores of the Caspian Sea (Strauss, 1396 HS: 120-128). Silk was one of the most important manufactured goods in this part of Iran and a favorite product among Europeans which was traded during the Safavid era.<sup>viii</sup> Though Vaugondy's map is limited to these lands in Iran- alike many other maps produced at that epoch- it comprises of lots of data, enabling us to consider them in local and geographical research. It, however, reflects how European cartographers have meticulously and holistically considered the territory of Iran, and thus strived to provide a detailed picture of boundaries in the late Safavid Empire.

To gain a better understanding of details provided, it is meritorious to compare the map drawn by Vaugondy with those of the Safavid epoch. Produced by a French cartographer Guan Leonard in around 1690 CE, 'Perse' illustrates the land of Iran by drawing yellow lines across the territory of Indian Mogols, Grande Tartarie, and Tvrqvi de Asie. The territory of Iran is specified besides its neighboring lands, without mention of the Safavid genealogy. Despite its precision, this map is incomparable with that of Vaugondy, yet it is among maps adopting a modern approach to draw Iran. Relying on modern

observation and data, apart from classical worldviews and those of Ptolemy, Leonard has demonstrated the boundary of Iran, which is why classical names have been replaced by

names such as Ādharbāyijān, Gīlān, Khurāsān, Shirwān, Irāq, Khūzistān, and Iṣṭirābād, and thus political borders of Iran conform to their latest political treaties.

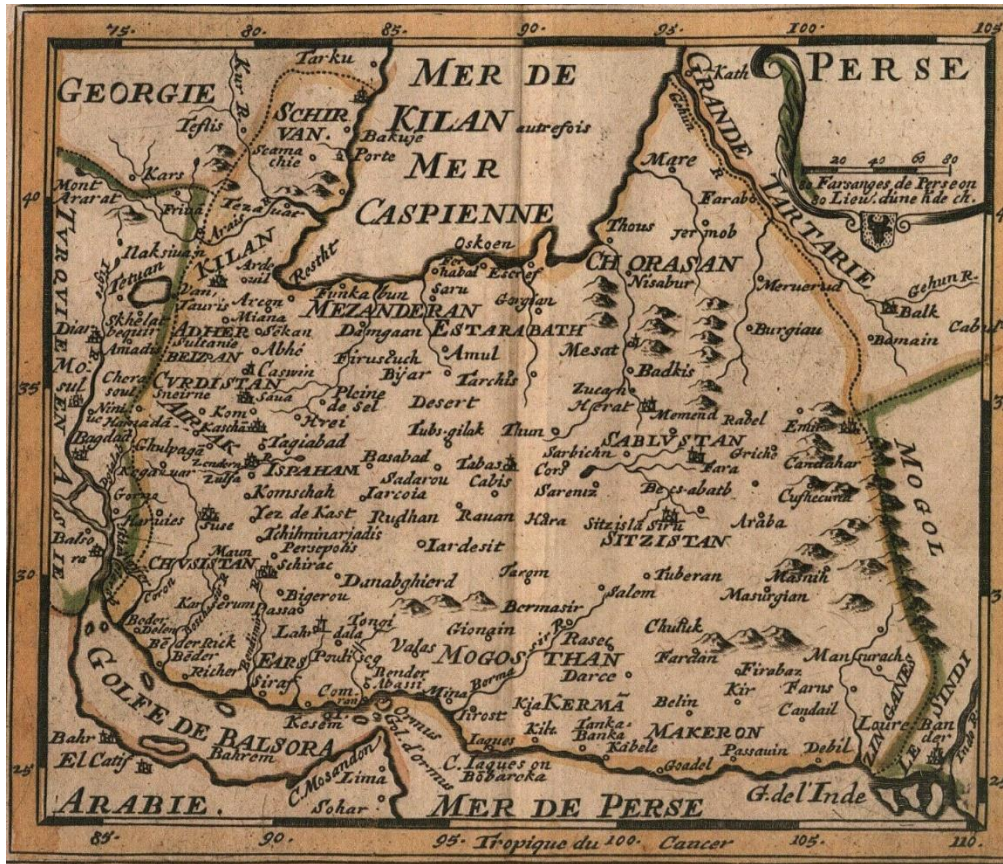


Figure 2 'Perse' by Guan Leonard in 1690 CE (Retrieved from 'Alā'ī, 2010; 87)

'La Persia' drawn by a Spanish cartographer Valencia Castell in 1729 CE is the second map which as of precision or details is incomparable with that of Vaugondy. In comparison with 'Perse', Castell's map drawn in the next four decades is less detailed. Though Castell- just like Vaugondy and Leonard- mention Arabs 'Irāq, Persian 'Irāq, Sablestan, Mecran on their maps, he has referred to the surrounding lands of Baghdād as Babilonia - which deserves peculiar examination. As evidenced in many European maps of the Safavid epoch, cartographers distanced from the classical, Greek mindset and inclined towards modern and empirical data, among which proper names widely changed.<sup>ix</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Maps are among the most important historical sources by which geographical boundaries, dispersion of human and natural phenomenon, documentation of historical names are

investigated. There are remarkable numbers of such like maps from the Safavid period onwards. Visiting Iran, many European travelers and cartographers produced maps. 'Etats du Grand-Seigneur en Asie: Empire de Perse, Pays des Usbecs, Arabie et Egypte' drawn by Gilles Robert de Vaugondy and his son Didier de Vaugondy in the first half of the twelfth century/ eighteenth century CE is among such maps. The crux of the present study was to highlight the significance of the aforementioned map in understanding the territory of Iran in the final years of the Safavid Empire, the turmoil around the collapse of the dynasty and the rise of the Afsharid. Investigating and analyzing the data included in the mentioned map along with the Persian sources, and European travelogues, it was proven that details provided on this map was widely correspond to the data written in Persian texts and European sources, which are also complementary. Thus, this map, is worthwhile



for two reasons. Firstly, the historical and geographical boundaries shown on this map were contingent upon the territory of Iran, rather than particular dynasties. Secondly, the map provided a detailed documentation of proper names, such as cities, nations, etc. It is essentially important as most of the European cartographers produced maps without direct exposure to Iran but texts authored by traders, world travelers, and visitors to Iran.

Considering these two points, it can be concluded that the map drawn by Gilles Robert de Vaugondy and his son Didier de Vaugondy is one of the notable visual sources of the twelfth century AH/ eighteenth century CE, which not only aligns with the data collected in Persian texts of the time, but familiarizes us with boundaries and the urban dispersion of Iran.

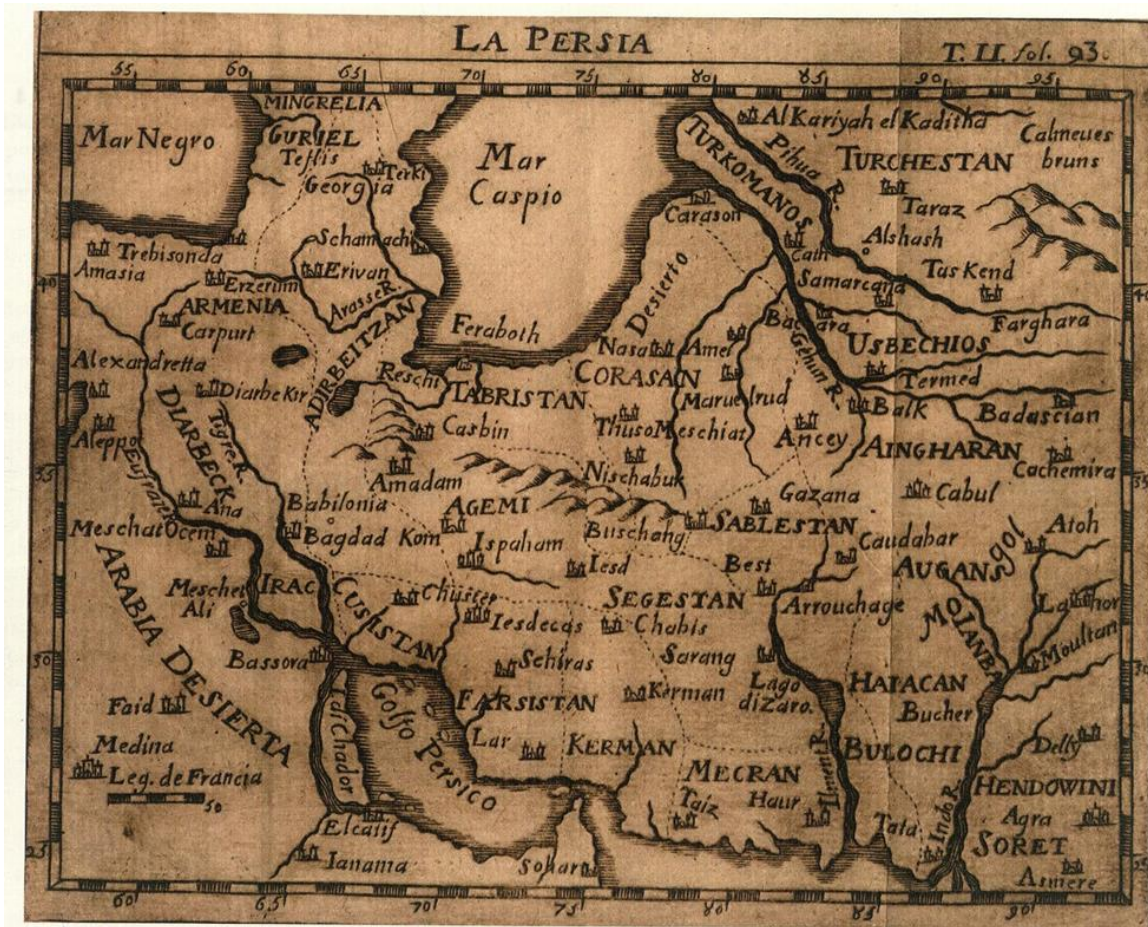


Figure 3 'La Persia' by Valencia Castell in 1729 CE (Retrieved from 'Alā'ī, 2010; 281)

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- <sup>ii</sup> In this context, see Sponberg Pedley, Mary (1992), *The Work of the Robert de Vaugondy Family of Mapmakers*, Londres: Map Collector Publications, 4-17.
- <sup>iii</sup> The historical boundaries of Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula are also drawn on this map though there existed none independent or authoritative government in such areas at that epoch.
- <sup>iv</sup> For more detailed exploration of this map, also see <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g7420.ct003760>.
- <sup>v</sup> In his mention of *Bīglarbīgīs* of the Safavid era, Anşārī has considered Tabrīz as the fourth group, while the author of *Dastūr al-Mulūk* clearly names Ādharbāyijān.
- <sup>vi</sup> Muslim geographers have referred the Two 'Iraqs, and to make a distinction between them they have named the Eastern lands of Zāgrus highlands as 'Iraq-i Ajam i.e. Persian 'Iraq. In return, 'Iraq-i 'Arab was the southern part of Mesopotamia (See Mustawfī Bāfiqī, 1390 HS: 23).
- <sup>vii</sup> Studies on the history and background of conducted by Dr. Muḥammad Bāqir Wuthūqī, professor of History at the University of Tihṙān are invaluable. See his short but informative book on *Lāristān* Wuthūqī, Muḥammad Bāqir (1380 HS). *Lāristān*. Tihṙān: Daftar-i Pazhūhish-hā-yi Farhangī.
- <sup>viii</sup> For more details on how Iranians manufactured silk during the Safavid dynasty, see Olearius, 1363 HS: 266-268. Researching the commercial politics in Iran during the Safavid era and the significance of silk in commercial practices between Iranians and Europeans, Rudi Matthee has provided invaluable results; see Matthee, 1401 HS.
- <sup>ix</sup> The author appreciates the help of Yāsir Mullāzī'ī, PhD student of History at University of Tihṙān, to provide me with maps produced by Guan Leonard and Valencia Castell.

<sup>i</sup> It is worthy of note that despite sporadic studies and merely geographical writings, there are findings concerning the territory of Iran during the Safavid dynasty in several treatises written in Persian, historical sources and European travel writings. Some of these texts are Mīrzā 'Alī Naqī Nuşayrī's *Alqāb wa Mawājib-I dawrah-yi Salāṙīn-i Şafawīah*; Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Mustawfī's *Kyfiyyat-i Jam'-i Māl-gudhārī wa Jam'yyat-i Īrān dar 'Ahd-i Shāh Sulṙān Ḥusayn*, or *Āmār-i mālī wa Niṙāmī-i Īrān dar 1128 yā 'Asākīr-i Fīrūzī -i Maāthīr-i Shāh*