

THE TALAR-I TAVILA OR HALL OF STABLES, A FORGOTTEN SAFAVID PALACE

The design, layout, and uses of the Safavid palace complex in Isfahan not only served to herald and celebrate the dynasty's might and greatness, but also to make it part of the city's public space. In contrast, for example, to the Ottoman tradition, the Safavid shahs neither surrounded their palace precinct with fortified walls nor eschewed contact with their subjects. The palace complex, wedged between the public royal square and the semi-public mansion-lined Chahar-Bagh avenue, therefore, had both private and public areas that could be reached through various gates from the royal square. The public area consisted mainly of food storage and preparation, bureaucratic, textile, and equipment facilities, and quarters for the palace staff. The private area included the royal harem and other buildings where the shahs and their women lived and amused themselves, and official buildings, which were separated by a wall from this entirely private part of the complex and which were used for all kinds of court assemblies.¹ One of these official buildings was the Talar-i Tavila, a freestanding structure in a walled rectangular garden with a reflecting pool, fountains, and trees.

From an architectural point of view, the Talar-i Tavila belonged to a type of building that dominated the design of many Safavid palaces in Isfahan, including important royal buildings such as the Chihil Sutun, the 'Ali Qapu,² the A'ina Khana, and the 'Imarat-i Hazar Jarib. According to Alemi, this dominant design combined an iwan and a *tālār*, and was used particularly for garden pavilions. The iwan is basically a vaulted space enclosed on three sides and open on the fourth. This open side was joined, or rather extended, by a *tālār* or a full-height porch open on all sides with a flat overhanging roof supported by wooden columns. However, the Talar-i Tavila, although incorporating the same design principle as the Chihil Sutun, used a different version of this basic iwan-*tālār* combination, because of its location with preexisting structures.³ Whereas the Talar-i Tavila was possibly an

extension of a sixteenth-century building and was inserted within the confines of the space between the harem, the 'Ali Qapu, and the remainder of the palace complex, the Chihil Sutun was not encumbered by existing constructions and space limitations. Consequently, it is larger and more complex and varied in its design conception and realization than the Talar-i Tavila. Despite differences in size and architectural variation, however, both buildings served the same purpose, to wit: to hold audiences, meetings, conversations, banquets, and other official public functions.⁴ The Talar-i Tavila was the only building of its kind, however, where visitors had to 'run a gauntlet' of led-horses accoutered with gold tack and other gold implements, richly dressed soldiers, and rare and ferocious animals, all aimed at impressing and overawing them. That the court on all occasions was also richly dressed and the official banquet offered to the visitor was served on golden plates and in golden vessels had the same objective.

This architectural context has already been dealt with in some detail by others. Therefore our study will focus, not on the overall designs of Safavid gardens and the buildings in them, but rather, from a historical perspective, on the functions and the vicissitudes of the now forgotten Safavid palace, the Talar-i Tavila. I want to bring this building back from oblivion because it appears to have had a rather special role. For, although the Chihil Sutun was also known as a *dawlatkhāna*, it would seem that the Talar-i Tavila was used almost exclusively as the shah's public audience hall for receiving foreign ambassadors, for royal council meetings, and for other grand occasions, including the celebration of the passage of the New Year (*tahvīl-i Nawrūz*), and on two occasions for legitimizing the investiture of weak pretenders to the throne. It fulfilled these functions from the date of its completion until the end of the Safavid dynasty.

In spite of this palace's importance and its public character, however, less is known about it than about

other Safavid palaces, most of which had a more private character. The other palaces—including some, such as the Namakdan, about which otherwise little is known—have frequently been described by travelers; ground plans and drawings have often been made of them, and even photographs of some exist. The Talar-i Tavila was not so fortunate. Only two seventeenth-century engravings of the building exist, and, despite the fact that Europeans were often received in the hall and left detailed descriptions of it, researchers have rarely used them. In the nineteenth century, none of the European travelers who made drawings, ground plans, or photographs of Safavid palaces included the Talar-i Tavila among their output.

This lack of attention cannot have been because the building was not beautiful, for it was as magnificent as the Chihil Sutun. Even late-nineteenth-century Persians who had never seen the Talar-i Tavila in all its glory waxed lyrical in the hyperbole they used to describe it. It is an affirmation of the lasting impression that the magnificence of the Talar-i Tavila made on the late-Qajar generation that Firaydun Mirza, one of the sons of Zill al-Sultan, governor of Isfahan (1874–1906) and the man responsible for its neglect and then its destruction, described it in 1898 in the following terms:

The Talar Tavile, or Stable Hall, of the Isfahan palace, stripped of Feridun's flowers of speech, was a fairy-like structure in the reign of Shah 'Abbas the Great. It was an abode where some Persian jinn and his court might seek shelter on starry nights, and scarce regret the shadowy seclusion of their airy fairyland. Venetian crystals of every colour of the rainbow formed the sashes dividing it into three compartments. The groined ceiling, richly wrought in coloured-glass mosaic, was supported on wooden pillars as graceful as flower-stems, all adorned in purple and in yellow. Tapestries of unimaginable beauty covered the walls. Water rose in a spray from many fountains, and fell with a splash into a tank of snowy marble that filled the central compartment of this Crystal Palace. There it was that Soliman Shah, the successor of 'Abbas the Less, was crowned the Asylum of the Universe; and thither, through the shady compound of chenar-trees, the representatives of the foreign Powers were wont to wend their way to the ambassadorial audiences. On those gala occasions the garden was tricked out in a fashion calculated to dazzle the visitors with the wealth and splendour of the Persian court. Fountains innumerable cast their liquid diamonds to the flashing sky. Water rippled through channels hewn

out of porphyry. Flowers of the brightest colours yielded their sweets to the fierce hornets and humming bees. The best blood of the imperial stud was led out in harness, all ablaze with precious stones, and hobbled hard by the mangers surrounding the gardens with chains of massive gold. The paths were crowded with courtiers, grave and reverend; they were there to do homage to the Firangis whom the King of kings delighted to honour. "Such, monsieur," said Feridun Mirza, pausing to take breath, "was the appearance of the Talar Tavile in the days when the pomp and magnificence of the Court of Shah 'Abbas the Great were the envy and admiration of every country in the East."⁵

In spite of its fame, its beauty, and its public character relative to other Safavid palaces, the Talar-i Tavila is still an unknown and, in effect, ignored historical fact. So far, it has been the subject of only one publication, which is almost exclusively focused on its location.⁶ By comparing Chardin's, Kaempfer's and Olearius's descriptions and drawings of the building with Kaempfer's "town plan" (*planographia*) of Isfahan, Luschetzky has convincingly identified its site. However, as far as its uses and the vicissitudes of its history are concerned, both during and after the Safavid period, Luschetzky's study is rather brief. He also overlooked quite a number of Safavid and Qajar sources that could shed more light on the layout and embellishment of the building and the uses to which it was put. In the two standard handbooks in Persian on the historical monuments of Isfahan, one by Hunarfar and the other by Mihrabadi, the Talar-i Tavila is either dealt with perfunctorily or just mentioned in passing, without any meaningful detail or elaboration.⁷ By making use of the important and detailed additional information available, this paper aims to shed light on the decoration, the layout, the use, and the demise of the building.

Name and Date of Construction

According to Qajar sources, the Talar-i Tavila was built during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), but no contemporary source makes that claim—in fact, there is no mention at all of the building during the time of Shah 'Abbas I. Blake argues that, "there is little record of individual structures within the palace precincts for those years."⁸ However, the first Dutch ambassador to Iran, Jan Smidt, who had an audience with Safi I on 24 May 1629, described a number of

buildings in the palace complex, one of which may have been the Talar-i Tavila.

Having arrived there [at the palace complex], we were led through a court and some rooms, and then came to a hall of reasonable size, next to [probably elevated above] the ground, covered with carpets, and without any [other] decoration; in the center of this [hall] there was a square basin full of water to provide cooling. The king was seated on a carpet in a corner of the room; around him were many of the magnates, pell-mell, as one says, with little ceremony. ... Afterwards we rose and went with the others to a large court, where many tablecloths had been spread on the ground, next to running waters under the trees. ... After the meal we rose and were led to the royal house [palace] and passed by a long hall, the center of which was normally covered with all kinds of gold bottles, ewers and the like. ... Having passed by this hall, we came to a porch (*gaeldery*) where the king was seated with his principal courtiers.⁹

Smidt's description leaves no doubt that, contrary to Blake's conclusion, there were already a few buildings within the walled palace complex. However, the description is too vague and incomplete to be certain whether the Talar-i Tavila was among these structures. The building described by Smidt, like the Talar-i Tavila, had a square basin in the center and was reached by going through a court and some rooms, but it had no decorations whatsoever, which may simply indicate that it was not yet finished. This may also explain why Olearius saw European paintings on the walls rather than the traditional Persian paintings that were noted later on. However, Chardin's description of the building suggests that it may have been built even before the reign of Shah 'Abbas I. For he wrote: "The entire surface [of the Talar-i Tavila] is totally gilded, and the gold [used] is so thick, considering that it was applied more than 100 years ago, one sees no sign of tarnish or flaking."¹⁰

Shah Safi I (r. 1629–42) was absent from Isfahan between 1631 and 1636, and one may wonder—if the *tālār* was not built under 'Abbas I—whether it was actually ordered by Safi and constructed during his absence. The building may indeed have been built by Safi I, for it is mentioned for the first time in 1637, when he celebrated the passage of the New Year "in a *tālār* that had been built in the middle of the stables (*tavila*)."¹¹ Further evidence that the hall was built by him is provided by the *Tārīkh-i Bīzhan*, which states that in the year 1640 Safi I celebrated Nawruz (New Year) in the Talar-i Tavila, which "had been constructed

by him" (*ahdāth kardeh-ye ān hizrat*).¹²

This link with the royal stables is confirmed by contemporary European sources. According to Chardin: "It is called, as we have already said, *talaar tavielah*, which can be translated as the Hall of Stables; this name was given it, because on certain days they keep led-horses close to it, as we have just said. For *talaar* properly means a room elevated in the manner of a verandah, and *tavielah* means stables, or any other location where horses are stabled."¹³ Kaempfer stated that the *tālār*'s name was "derived from the fact that in the past it served as the stables where the horses for the shah awaited his pleasure."¹⁴ The real stables were moved to a location on the other side of the harem. Whether that was done at the same time as the stables hall was constructed is not clear. Luschey argues that the stables were moved between 1666 and 1684, based on the descriptions left by Olearius, Chardin, and Kaempfer. However, it seems more likely that it was done earlier, if only because they would have had to have been relocated to make way for the creation of the park in which the Talar-i Tavila was situated. According to the journal kept by the Dutch embassy, in 1652 the entrance passageway to the audience hall, which was reached via the 'Ali Qapu, was planted on both sides with trees and guarded by the usual musketeers, which implies that the park had already been laid out and therefore that the stables had already been moved by that time, and more likely, from the very beginning of its construction.¹⁵

Location and Entrance

The Hall of Stables was located behind the 'Ali Qapu, adjacent to the royal harem, and "occupies exactly the space situated between the two passageways that run in a westerly direction from the Royal Square: one goes to the harem, the other to the park. Consequently, the garden layout is rather narrow. ... The stables are now on the other side of the harem, so that the vacated area could be transformed into a nice park, whose main jewels are the Hall of Stables and a fountain."¹⁶ Although the evidence for this location is very detailed and strong, Luschey failed to mention that two Persian sources also locate the Talar-i Tavila next to (*dar kinār-i*) the Zayanda Rud.¹⁷ This is clearly a mistake, for both texts refer to the reception of the "Valandis" (Dutch) or Frankish embassy (actually an embassy from Holstein), and from Olearius' description, as well as from later ones, it is clear that the *tālār* was located,

not next to the Zayanda Rud, but behind the 'Ali Qapu.

Foreign dignitaries who were to be received in audience by the shah arrived via the Maydan-i Shah and alighted from their horses at the 'Ali Qapu, where there were two gates to the royal palace complex. One led to the 'Ali Qapu, the other to the royal harem. It is obvious that the latter was not the one through which unauthorized personnel would be allowed to enter the palace complex. Therefore, dignitaries must have entered by way of the 'Ali Qapu, where they were usually asked to wait in a special room. Chardin described it as follows: "Towards the north, close to the walls of the palace, opposite one of the doors that leads to the main entrance, is a very ancient set of chambers, which forms a square, 80 feet to a side; it was built by Shah Tahmasp in the previous century."¹⁸ After having spent some time there the ambassador and his suite, or whoever else had been granted a royal audience, went through one or more doors, and down a narrow passageway, lined with trees, soldiers, and richly decked-out horses and other animals.

According to Chardin:

From this building to the gate, it seems as if there is a rather long passageway covered by the tallest plane-trees, along which, from the entrance to this room, are stone mangers placed at intervals of 10 to 12 paces. They are made of lime and talc, are rather high, and are used to tether horses selected from the royal stables, normally 12 to 15 [of them], and sometimes a larger number, on festive days, or when some ambassadors and other important foreigners are received in audience by the king. They are led along this passageway, past these magnificently caparisoned horses, whose tack is entirely covered with precious stones and their entire tackle, nails, hammers, pails, combs, in short, all that is needed in a stable, is of solid gold, as we have described in its proper place. To the right and left of the room are some pavement tiles as well as trees planted here and there, in a haphazard fashion, as the Persian do. ... The park stretches far and wide. It is divided up into flower-beds composed of spacious squares, which are separated from one another by large trees and flowers of so many kinds that there are always some in bloom during three of the seasons.¹⁹

Chardin continues:

Right in the middle of the place that faces the hall, on either side, there are nine horse mangers, where, on official occasions such as audiences for ambassadors, the same number of the most beautiful horses from the royal stables, covered and caparisoned with precious stones,

are attached by golden chains. All the necessary stable equipment, which are also of gold right down to the nails and hammers, are also put there. It is through this passageway that all the ambassadors, and other foreigners of standing, are taken to go to their audience, so that they may see that marvelous pomp.²⁰

This description of the gate(s), the narrow passageway, the lines of trees and soldiers, and the horses and other animals is confirmed by other contemporary visitors to the Hall of Stables.

Dimensions, Layout, and Decoration

Olearius, who was the first European traveler to leave a description of the building, describes it as follows:

The pleasure-house itself was three levels higher than the garden; 24 meters [12 *Klafter*] long, eight wide, and about six high. In front red curtains were hung, which could be lifted and lowered with a rope. The pillars on which the roof rested were octagonal wooden ones; they were painted and gilded and, like the entire room, embellished with gilded foliage. On the left side were three large European paintings of historical scenes hanging on the wall. The floor was covered with very precious carpets. In the middle of the palace is a square basin, in which were all kinds of flowers, lemons, oranges, pomegranates, and other fruits.²¹

The Dutch embassy journal for 1651 records the following: "The building, which is covered with very precious carpets, is not [otherwise] embellished with costly items except for its walls which are covered from top to bottom with ornamentation, both painted and gilded, such as may be seen in the houses of the magnates here in Isfahan and at the governor of Shiraz's [palace], as well as among the nobility of a certain rank, being the normal adornment of their houses, sitting places, and rooms."²² Gone were the European paintings that Olearius had seen embellishing the iwan's walls, replaced by decorations and paintings by Persian artists.

Chardin tells us:

This stable hall measures 400 paces in front, 26 in depth, and 25 feet in height; it is covered with a mosaic ceiling supported by painted and gilded wooden pillars. It is divided into three parts, of which the middle one is raised nine feet above the ground and the side rooms three feet only. Many-colored Venetian crystal glass frames form the divisions. The entire hall is hung with curtains all around, lined with the finest Indian chintzes,

which extend along the side facing the sun, eight feet above the ground so as not to block the view. A large marble water basin, with waterspouts all around [its edge] and in the middle, occupies the center of the hall. It is here that Shah 'Abbas II's successor was crowned.

This room is made almost entirely of wood, which does not reach the ground, but is raised about three feet above it. Its roof is flat, supported by high round pillars, which are covered with rather thick gold, and rise about 26 or 27 feet high. The ceiling is worked in wood and mosaic, which form compartments that, as well as at other places, glitter with gold. Thus, this room is open on all sides, except when one lowers the curtains, which are fastened on top of the pillars at ceiling level on the outside. This is done on one or the other side, in accordance with the hour when it is known the king will appear, be it morning or afternoon. But when they lower them, they do not just let them drop, but draw them with ropes towards the nearest of the large trees in the park, and attach them to their trunks in such a way that they are 10 feet above the ground, and form a kind of large umbrella which prevents the sun from shining into that room without hindering a free view on all sides of those who gather there, whether they are standing or sitting. The curtains are made of red cloth on the outside and are lined with fine Indian fabrics, which have been painted in very gay colors. The ribbons, which reinforce these curtains, as well as all the ropes, are made of silk ferret. The main part of the apartment is divided into three segments, separated [from one another] only by low wooden railings, which have been richly gilded. The two sides are two rooms, each 36 paces in length and 16 in width. Between the two rooms is a *talaar*, what we would call a large verandah, which has been raised four feet higher than the [adjacent] rooms, and which has in the middle a very large and deep white marble basin, which has very clear water that runs through a tube made of the same marble. The entire place is completely gilded, and the gold is so thick, considering that it was applied more than 100 years ago, that still now one sees no sign of tarnish or flaking.²³

In Kaempfer's version:

The palace constitutes the end of the western side of the width of the park and also has an open terraced hall (*tālār*) with four octagonal pillars, which bear the flat front roof. A three-foot-high wooden railing marks off the three levels of the terrace, which, like all such buildings, has been built above ground. In the middle is a large square marble basin, in which water rises fed by many pipes. Above it hangs a crystal candelabrum, a present from Venice to the shah. On the back side of the hall is a graceful iwān [portico], where the throne

of the shah is placed for audiences. Everything has been embellished in a profligate manner with gold and mirrors. On festive occasions the space in front of the terrace is also included to compensate for the narrowness of the hall. To that end a purple carpet is displayed, while to provide protection against the sun an awning is mounted.²⁴

The engravings in Olearius, Chardin, and Kaempfer's works bear out the description provided by these and other authors. The hall was indeed situated in the middle of a narrow garden, which was bisected by huge plane trees. It was the first thing one saw upon exiting the passageway coming from the 'Ali Qapu. The hall itself was constructed nine feet above the ground and its side rooms three feet. Four pillars supported the hall's flat roof, which had a balustrade. The drawings also show the iwān or portico at the back of the hall, where the shah sat (referred to here and in other buildings as the *shāh-nishān*), and in the center a marble basin with jets of water. They also agree on the type of decoration on the walls (foliage), and the gilt- and mirror-covered ceiling and pillars as well as on the other parts that made up the building. A railing, Venetian lusters, and three steps separated the terraces, which adjoined the central hall, from one another. In front of the hall, along the width of the garden, was a marble water tank connected to the basin. Whether the entire space—the hall and its side halls—could have held 500 people and the adjoining garden another 2,000, as Blake estimated, is a moot point, but 500 is probably much too high, given that the royal council consisted of some 100 persons (see figs. 1–2).

What the various authors do not agree on are the dimensions of the building. Olearius estimated that the *tālār* measured 48 x 72 feet and Chardin gives 26 x 104 feet (Kaempfer provides no information). As Sussan Babaie has pointed out, the discrepancy in measurements need not worry us. The same authors also provide totally different measurements for the Chihil Sutun as well, and none of them match the actual size of the palace.²⁵ The discrepancies can in part be explained by assuming that one of the travelers measured the iwān, the other the *tālār*.

Uses for the Hall

The Hall of Stables, unlike most Safavid buildings in the royal palace complex, was a public building. Only the Chihil Sutun and the 'Ali Qapu also served as a



Fig. 1. Reception given at the Talar-i Tavila to the embassy of the duke of Holstein by Shah Safi in 1637. From A. Olearius, *Muskowitische oft begehrte Beschreibung der neuen orientalischen Reise* (Schleswig, 1656).

divānkhāna after the reign of 'Abbas I, although at times other palaces were also used to receive foreign dignitaries. Because it was used to receive foreign ambassadors, to celebrate the New Year (*tahvīl-i Naurūz*), and to hold royal council meetings, it was also referred to as the *'imarāt-i dawlatkhāna*.²⁶ Safi I used it as his main audience hall for visitors such as the Holstein embassy in 1637 and the Ottoman ambassador in 1640²⁷ and for the New Year.²⁸ Although Jabiri-Ansari, an early-twentieth-century local Isfahani historian, doubted that it ever functioned as a *tahvīlkhāna* (the room where the passing of the old to the New Year was celebrated), because he had seen the building with its horse mangers in his youth and had concluded that it had been used to tether the shah's horses, contemporary texts clearly prove him wrong.²⁹

The building continued to be used for public audiences, royal council meetings, and New Year's celebrations throughout the remainder of the Safavid period. Shah 'Abbas II (r. 1642–66), for example, received the Dutch ambassador Joan Cuneaus there in 1652.³⁰ 'Abbas II also used the building for royal council meetings and for his New Year's celebrations, and, in addition, for handing down judicial decisions.³¹ The high point in its history, however, was probably the enthronement of Safi II (= Sulayman) in 1666. Chardin, who describes this event, mentions that the building in which the shahs usually held their public meetings, was called "*talaar tavieleh*, ... where the deputies of the main government officials, the chief astrologer and other courtiers were allowed to make their three normal prostrations in his presence."³²

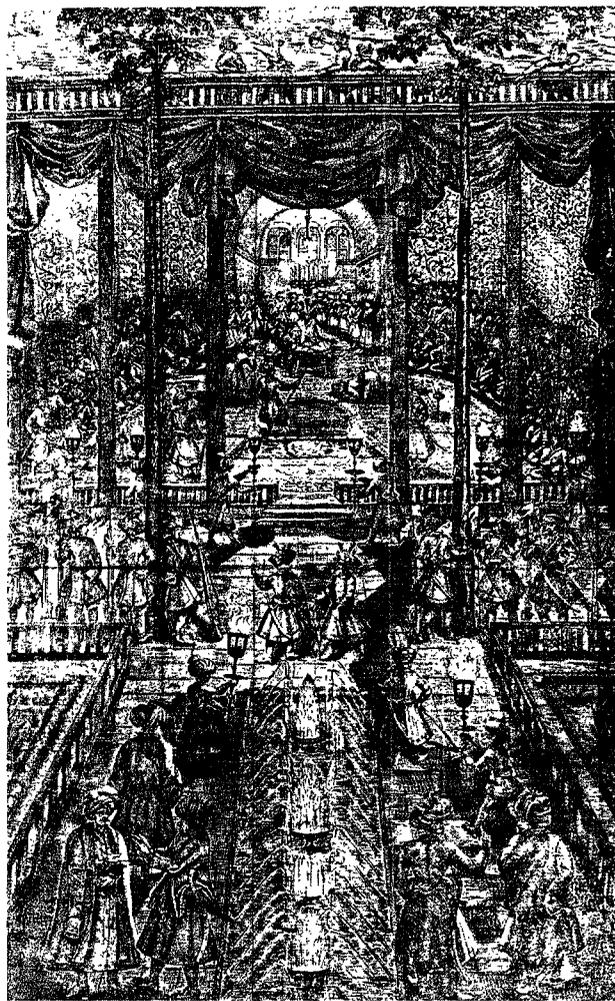


Fig. 2. Evening reception at the Talar-i Tavila showing Shah Suleyman's accession ceremony in 1666. From Kaempfer, *Amoenitates Exoticarum*.

The tradition of holding public audiences, meetings of the royal council, and New Year's celebrations in the Talar-i Tavila continued under Shah Sulayman (r. 1666–94). Joan van Leene, the Dutch ambassador, was received in audience in the “Talaal” (*sic*; *Tālār*) in 1690. No detailed description is provided, but it is clear that this *tālār* was situated next to the harem and behind the ‘Ali Qapu, the exact location of the Talar-i Tavila.³³ In October 1692, the shah presided over the royal council, and in March 1693, he celebrated Nawruz there.³⁴ The same practices continued under Shah Sultan Husayn (r. 1694–1722). Without naming it explicitly, it would seem that the Portuguese ambassador referred to the *tālār* as the place where he

was received in audience and where New Year was celebrated in 1697. He entered the ‘Ali Qapu, was asked to wait in a room, and then continued to the audience. Twelve led-horses were ranged on one side.³⁵ Jacobus Hoogcamer, the Dutch ambassador, was likewise received in royal audience in the “Talaal” (*sic*; *Tālār*) in 1701.³⁶ The Talar-i Tavila was also recorded as being used for conducting official business in 1693 and 1695 and for the celebration of the New Year in 1696 and 1697.³⁷

Cornelis de Bruijn, who visited the palace complex in 1703, while the shah was absent from Isfahan, confirms the continued use of the Talar-i Tavila as the royal audience hall.

From thence they carried me into another court, and then into a great building, where there was a hall of extraordinary dimensions, very lofty and very light, with great curtains which fell from the ceiling down to the floor. I had the curiosity to lift up one of them, and found this hall full of looking-glasses, and adorned with fine columns of wood, painted and gilt; it is the very finest part of the palace, and here also the King gives audience to foreign ministers. There are fine fountains or basons before it, and a canal to water the trees of the garden.”³⁸

More explicit is the description of the royal audience given to Artemiya Volinsky, the Russian ambassador, on 4 May 1717. As in the case of other visitors, Volinsky was taken to the ‘Ali Qapu, which he entered, and was then asked to wait in an inner court. After two hours, the embassy went through a gate and entered a garden:

The first thing that presented [itself], was a noble view of twenty horses standing in a row, richly caparisoned, having all their saddles and bridles ornamented with gold and silver, and some of them set with sapphires, emeralds, and other precious stones, of great value; the horses were all tied to a rope fixed to the ground, at the extremities, by a stake of gold, near which lay a mallet of the same metal for driving it. [Approaching the hall of audience the embassy passed lions and an elephant. They turned left], and had a full view of the hall of audience, about an hundred yards distant. It seemed to stand by itself in the middle of the garden; it is indeed contiguous to the seraglio on the south, but is quite open to the north. Before the entry is a large fountain of pure water, which springs upwards in three pipes, and falls into a bason filled with roses, jessamine, and many other fine flowers. [The embassy came to the stairs, and] we ascended by eight steps of marble, the whole breadth

of the hall. From the roof hung a canvass, which was stretched out over the stair, and shaded the whole inside of the edifice. The hall is a spacious square building, with a terrace roof; the ceiling is very magnificent, being all arched, and set with mirrors of different magnitudes till within three feet of the floor, which is quite covered with silk carpets, interwoven with branches and foliage of gold and silver. In the middle were two basins, into which several pipes, each about eight feet high, spouted water, which, falling upon roses and other flowers, has a fine effect on a hot day. The farther end of the hall is a semicircle; here sat the Shah upon a sofa, raised about a foot from the floor, which was elevated four steps above the rest of the hall.³⁹

Volinsky had a second audience with Shah Sultan Husayn "at the same palace as formerly, called Tavalea Telear, i. e., the palace near the stables," thus leaving no doubt about the identity of the audience hall.⁴⁰

On 28 August 1722, a few days before the fall of Isfahan to the Afghans, Shah Sultan Husayn received the agent of the Dutch East Indies Company in the Talar-i Tavila. We went there together, passing through some gates and along some passage ways, which were demolished at many places, but planted with trees, and with a beautiful water tank with many fountains in the middle. We passed between 200 lined up soldiers till we were at 90 paces from the Shah, where we took off our hats at the instruction of the *mihmāndār bāshī* and bowed reverently. We then were conducted to a place closer by, being a spacious *tālār* (called *tehviēle talaal* [*sic*; or the long veranda]), which was completely embellished with mirror-glass.⁴¹

The Afghan rulers (r. 1722–29) seem to have continued to use the Talar-i Tavila for audiences and council meetings as did Tahmasp II, the last Safavid ruler (r. 1730–32), because Dutch sources imply that there was no change in venue whenever Dutch officials were called to court. After Tahmasp II was deposed by his chief general Tahmaspqli Khan (later Nadir Shah), the latter organized an official accession to the throne ceremony for 'Abbas III (r. 1732–36), Tahmasp II's baby son, in the Talar-i Tavila, the second time that such a "coronation" ceremony had taken place in this building.⁴²

The Talar-i Tavila in the Qajar Period

In the period following the fall of the Safavid dynasty there is hardly any reference to or description of the Talar-i Tavila, as far as I have been able to ascertain.

Isfahan was no longer the royal capital, and most of the action occurred in other cities and regions, which therefore received more attention. When the building played a role of note it was still mentioned, however. For example, after the death of 'Ali Murad Khan Zand in Murchakhur (near Isfahan), the governor of Isfahan, Baqir Khan Khurasakani, appropriated his treasury and proclaimed himself shah in the Talar-i Tavila on 12 February 1785.⁴³ Since two previous shahs had received their investiture there, the choice of the *tālār* by Baqir Khan hardly seems coincidental given the number of other palaces that he had to choose from.

It is not until 1800 that a member of the East India Company's mission to Iran provides us with a current description of the state of the building:

In a large area, is another grand palace, with the females' apartments: the passage to these is through a covered stone gallery, with niches on the sides, and many turnings after quitting it. The hall of this palace is adorned with looking glasses, and the columns (which are of wood,) are painted and gilt. A curtain suspended from the ceiling to the floor, adds much to the magnificence of the apartment, and in front are fountains with *jet d'eau*. In this hall, as well as in that of the *chahul-sitoun*, the kings gave audiences to foreign ambassadors, &c. Behind is the seraglio. The walls of these apartments are ornamented with paintings of fruits and flowers, many of which are remarkably well executed; the sash windows of the rooms are glazed with small pieces of stained glass, fancifully disposed, representing the sun, stars, &c.⁴⁴

What is new in this description is the presence of the sash windows on both sides of the hall. They are not mentioned in Safavid sources and therefore must have been added during the Afsharid or Zand period. It is not a mistake by our British officer: some subsequent observers also mention them.

In 1809 the French traveler Dupré described the hall as follows:

Entering through 'Ali's Gate ['Ali Qapu], you come to a part of the palace which is called Talari-Tavile, or Hall of Stables. The ceiling and the pillars in front, which support it, are embellished with small inlaid pieces of glass that have been symmetrically set. The walls have been covered with glass [inlay] over a larger surface. The painting represents the hunt, landscapes, erotic scenes and some battles. Very beautiful pieces of marble, about one meter high and of different lengths, cover all the entire lower end of the room. In the middle is a square

basin. Another smaller one is situated lower. On the right, left and in the back are rooms, which are decorated in a very rich and gorgeous manner, with their embossed flowers in gilded plaster, paintings which call to mind the most beautiful landscapes of the Persian poets. To the right of the Talari-Tavile one enters a very large garden.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most detailed description of the Talar-i Tavila is that by Lt. Colonel Johnson, who in 1817 used the building as his lodgings during his stay in Isfahan and thus had ample time to observe and measure it. Although Johnson does not mention that he stayed in the Talar-i Tavila, the following arguments are in favor of that identification for the building in which he stayed. Johnson arrived at the Maydan-i Shah and went to the 'Ali Qapu. Next he provides his description of his lodgings, and then of the other buildings in the palace complex. The latter include the Chihil Sutun, the 'Imarat-i Naw, the Haft Dast (including a ground plan), and the A'ina Khana. Johnson further mentions the Hasht Bihisht, the Guldasta Bagh, the Bihisht-i A'in and the Nirangistan, but not the Talar-i Tavila. Since the text suggests that the building in which he lodged was behind the 'Ali Qapu, however, it is possible that it was the Talar-i Tavila. The building, which he calls an "audience hall," was approached through a narrow passageway, was situated in a garden, and had four pillars, separating railings, and a marble basin in the center; these, together with the general nature of its decorations, lead me to believe that Johnson is indeed describing the Talar-i Tavila.⁴⁶

One of Shah 'Abbas's palaces having been assigned to us as a residence, we proceeded hither, and after passing by high walls through many turnings, we entered by rather small doors into the area. We found the audience hall very magnificent; its front is open, and supported by four pillars covered with looking-glass, resting on stone pedestals; a dwarf railing joined their base-ments above the floor, which were three feet of stone. The extent of the room is 78 feet by 35, the height of the pillars to the long beams below the transverse ones, is 20 feet. In the midst is a tank of marble, 18 feet by 15, having a fountain, with a tray or basin of marble to intercept and disperse the water in its fall. The pillars support a square beam 14 inches deep; on which, and on the inner wall, rest the cross beams, which are joined by a concave moulding, the whole ornamented with colours on a gold ground. The beams below are covered with looking-glass, and on the sides are represented hunting scenes, in miniature painting on a gold ground.

A section of the ceiling would exhibit its square centre, or highest part, covered with looking-glass, the sloping sides studded with stars of the same substance, and the intermediate space covered with smaller stars and figures, also flowers painted in red, blue, and gold. The curves are ornamented with gold ground, and with paintings of hunting scenes; and the last horizontal division, even with the bottoms of the beams, is adorned with blue and gold flowers. The walls are ornamented in the following order, commencing from below. There is a wainscot of Tabriz marble, four feet high, variegated with flowers; next a range of pictures, and niches of two feet in height; then a broad blue moulding of eighteen inches, with a running pattern on it of gold flowers, leaves, and scrolls; above this are arches covered with looking-glasses, having a pillar between each. The arrangement of the side doors, niches, &c., if described as commencing with the opening of the front, is in the following order. Above the wainscot or marble already mentioned, are, first, a picture; next to it a niche; then gold flowers on a red ground; another picture; a door with gilt lattice work; a picture; a double door of gilt filligree work; a picture; a door; a picture; a niche with gold flowers on a red ground; and thus in succession. The plan of the front was similar to that of the sides, in respect to the alternation of doors and pictures, with the addition of a fire-place on each side. The entrance to this audience hall was through the space between the wall and the pillar next to it, the intermediate spaces between the other pillars being closed by a dwarf-railing. In the middle of the long face there is an open arch of 18 feet, leading to a room or recess, elevated one foot above the audience hall. This apartment was for the Shah, the nobility, and persons of elevated rank.⁴⁷

Dr. Lumsden, who stayed in Isfahan three years after Col. Johnson, provided a similar description. Like his predecessor he did not name or otherwise identify the building, beyond stating that he arrived at his quarters after having passed through some fine gardens and bazaars. However, from the description one may deduce that it was the Talar-i Tavila:

In the evening we visited part of the palace which was adjacent to our quarters. In one square, a splendid hall of audience above 75 feet in length, by 45 in breadth, with a proportional height, and lined with mirrors and gilding, was well deserving of notice. One side was open to the square or garden, and supported upon four pillars, cased in small mirrors. Immediately in its front was a long basin of water, and the remains of a canal with fountains down the center, extended to the opposite end of the garden.

In the center of the hall are the remains of a marble fountain, and behind it is a handsome arched room, which is raised above the hall, and must have been the place of the throne in former days. The painted glass in a large window in the back of the recess has a fine effect. The hall is lined with Tabreez marble to a height of four feet all round; and flowers and birds are represented in fine colours, but miserable workmanship. There are some wretched attempts at landscapes on the walls also, which are any thing but ornamental. Several beams cross this building some feet under the roof, and, though covered with mirrors, disfigure it exceedingly; nor are they of the slightest use, as they support nothing.⁴⁸

Mirza Salih Shirazi, known among other things as the editor of Iran's first newspaper, described the Talar-i Tavila in a travelogue that relates his visit to Isfahan in 1812:

Also belonging to the main buildings is the *Tālār-i Tavila*, which was the hall of audience (*dīvānkhāna*) of the Safavids. It is a *tālār* whose width is more than 10 *dhar'* [cubits]. Its ceiling is covered with mirrors, while its niches are painted, and its walls and pillars are [covered] with mirrors, gold and lapis lazuli (*lājvard*). There is one big basin (*hawz*) in front of the hall. On both sides of the basin there are rooms (*'imārat*) and windows (*urūsi*); there is also a garden on both sides of the basin, filled with flowers, sweet basil, trees, etc. In truth, it is a very [good building].⁴⁹

In 1834, Asif, the author of the *Rūstam al-Tavārīkh*, described the Talar-i Tavila as follows: "Two square multi-colored *orusi* windows [mark] the hall, whose ceiling consists of *muqarnas*, which has been painted and gilded with pure gold and lapis lazuli from Badakhshan. It is located next to the *'Ālī Qāpū* palace and is built in the style of the *Chihil Sutūn*. Around it are the brick built stables for the special royal horses."⁵⁰

The building was not only used as lodgings for foreign and other dignitaries who passed through Isfahan. When Binning visited Isfahan in 1851, he described the building and its function as follows: "Leaving the great square, I went to see a palace, or rather a house of audience, named the Talar Taveela; consisting of a large open room, some smaller private apartments, and a paved court in front. The Governor of the city often comes hither to transact public business. The rooms are painted and decorated in the usual fashion; but deserve no particular mention."⁵¹

Brusch, who visited Isfahan in 1860, does not

mention the Talar-i Tavila, but he describes the "system of corridors and doors, which all were plastered" that led from the garden in which the *tālār* was situated to the *'Ālī Qapu*.⁵² After 1860, the building deteriorated steadily. De Panisse, who visited Isfahan in 1866, wrote that the Talar-i Tavila was "dilapidated, but, in spite of this, still contained some well-preserved parts."⁵³ This neglect of the former Safavid buildings was not limited to the *tālār*. Mounsey observed in 1870 that the Chihil Sutun was being used as a workshop by the prince-governor's tent-makers. He also may have seen the *tālār*, for he wrote: "The further sights of the town are: the stables of Abbas, ornamented with paintings of horsemanship and the chase"; this kind of painting did indeed embellish the building, as is clear from the descriptions quoted earlier.⁵⁴ In 1870, Muhammad Mihdi al-Isfahani wrote that the *tālār* "does not have that much to commend itself. Because this was the place where the royal horses were tethered; the shah came there to see and inspect the horses and would sit there for some time. But it has not that much importance from the point of view of construction and superior foundation [*asās-i 'āli*]."⁵⁵ This description implies that the building was indeed deteriorating, and that al-Isfahani did not know much about the *tālār*'s history and use. In 1877, a local official, Mirza Husayn Khan Tahvildar, wrote a geography of Isfahan, which included a description of the royal buildings, among which figured the Talar-i Tavila. He did not mention anything at all about its dilapidated condition, however, in spite of the fact that a contemporary observer of Isfahan, the head of the Isfahan telegraph office, Ernst Höltzer, observed around 1890 that the "Tallar Dewileh was very much neglected and therefore little changed as part of the remaining Safavid royal buildings, most of which were worse off."⁵⁶ On the contrary, Tahvildar's description suggests that the building was still in good condition:

The Talar-i Tavila, the government house (*dīvānkhānā-yi dawlatī*), is very large and is situated behind the royal stables and next to the *'Ālī Qapu*. It consists of one large painted and decorated *tālār*, and rooms (*utāq*), which are embellished with pearls and the like, gilt and *muqarnas*. It also has very beautiful upper and lower rooms (*buyūtāt*) and one large basin in front of the *tālār*, which is connected to a long pond (*daryācha*). In addition there are three private rooms (*khalvat*) on three sides of the building. This government house (*dīvānkhāna*) was where the public audiences (*salām-i 'āmm*) of the Safavid kings were held.⁵⁷

Two European observers also did not say anything about the decaying state of the building. In 1889, when Lacoïn de Vilmorin visited Isfahan, he described the Talar-i Tavila as follows: "In the middle stands out clearly a magnificent *tālār*, with a protruding roof, which is supported by light wooden pillars. It is here in these buildings that the prince's stables are situated."⁵⁸ In 1890, Curzon only devoted one line to the building, viz.: "The Talar-i-Tavileh, or Hall of the Stables, a part of the Palace now used for official business." This business was, as Lacoïn de Vilmorin reported, serving as a princely stable.⁵⁹ Shortly thereafter most of the building was destroyed. D'Allemagne, who was in Isfahan in 1906, mentions that, "a few years ago [which must have been between 1899 and 1900], there was on the left-hand side (of the royal road coming from the 'Ali Qapu) a large palace which Zill al-Sultan [the governor of Isfahan] had destroyed."⁶⁰ This palace may have been the Hall of Stables, and given Sparroy's description in what follows, the destruction must have taken place shortly after his departure from Isfahan in 1899, because at the time he described what was left of the Hall of Stables in 1898, it was in ruins, and was being used, no longer as the prince's, but as the head-eunuch's (*āghā-bāshī*) stables. Sarre, who before 1900 had been able to take photographs of, among others, the A'ina Khana and the Haft Dast, did not mention the Talar-i Tavila at all.⁶¹

In 1898, Wilfrid Sparroy, the teacher of Zill al-Sultan's children, was taken by his enthusiastic pupils to the site of the famed palace, which allowed him to provide posterity with the last description of what remained of the Talar-i Tavila:

"Here is the Talar Tavileh, Sahib." My eyes opened with astonishment. "That!," I cried. "Surely that is the Agha-Bashi's stable-yard? Why, I ride across it every day!"... Of all the sights of Isfahan, that of the Talar Tavile, standing as it does within the walls of the palace enclosure, might be said to be the most pathetic in the pitiless decay of its splendour. ... The noble chenar-trees, long fallen to the axe, serve as the material for carpentry nowadays. The water-channels are empty. The walls and mangers are crumbling to a fall. The pavilion itself recalls the mud huts of Kohrud. To make the decay worse confounded, there was life among the ruins. Half a dozen filly foals, let loose from the head eunuch's stables, kicked and gambolled in the sun.⁶²

The disappearance of the trees had already started much earlier than the destruction of the hall. Binning

observed in 1851, "The soldiers in the guardhouse at the entrance [to the Chahar Bagh], when in want of firewood, make no scruple of taking an axe and cutting a huge cantle out of any of the magnificent old trees."⁶³ But this was only pilfering—the real onslaught on the trees began thirty-seven years later, in 1888, according to Browne, who wrote:

Signs of the prevailing vandalism were apparent alike in the palace and the garden. In the former, the beautiful mural decorations (except the pictures) were being covered with hideous brick-red paint. In the latter, the plane-trees were falling beneath the axes of a party of woodcutters. A remonstrance addressed to the latter merely elicited the thoroughly Persian reply, "*Digar ... hukm-ast*" ("Well ... it is ordered"). They seemed to be sorry to be engaged in destroying the relics of the glorious past, but—"digar"—what else could they do?⁶⁴

The general neglect of the royal buildings and the park in which they were situated, followed by the deterioration of buildings such as the Talar-i Tavila, had a destructive effect on them. Contemporary European observers ascribed this to a national character trait, for "No one in Persia thinks it necessary to repair or even preserve what was once the lauded glory of their land."⁶⁵ This development ended with the sale of many of these palaces in the 1880's–1890's. Most of them were destroyed, and the bricks, the faience, and the wooden pillars and woodwork were sold, and often other buildings were erected on the same site. The neglect and sale of the buildings was the result of the government's policy, decided upon in 1886, to sell a major part of the crown lands (*khālīṣa*) owned by the state, which included the royal Safavid buildings.⁶⁶

It seemed that the decision to sell most of the Safavid palaces in Isfahan in particular was driven not only by lust for money, but also by Nasir al-Din Shah's antipathy for the Safavids. Hajj Sayyah, the Iranian world traveler and reformer, reported that in 1886 Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, the leading Islamic reformer, asked Zill al-Sultan why he did not maintain and repair the Safavid buildings, so that, just as in Europe, China, India, and elsewhere, they could be admired by local and foreign visitors as evidence of past glory. Why had he leveled them to the ground instead? Zill al-Sultan responded by showing Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi a number of royal edicts ordering him to destroy the Safavid monuments. Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi countered by saying, "But you are the Shah's son after all, you could have interceded."

Zill al-Sultan then showed him other documents from the Shah, which were from top to bottom filled with vilification of the Safavids, and he said, "This is the answer to my intercession."⁶⁷ Whatever the truth of the matter, whether the driving force behind the destruction of the Safavid palaces was Nasir al-Din Shah or his son Zill al-Sultan, a fact is that in total 74 Safavid palaces and their gardens were destroyed during the latter's governorship of Isfahan.⁶⁸ In fact, the decision maker as to the demolition of the Talar-i Tavila was Zill al-Sultan's older sister, Iftikhar al-Dawla, in 1900. She also was the moving force behind the demolition of some other Safavid palaces such as the Jahannama, the Bihisht-i A'in, the Bagh-i Khargah, and the 'Imarat-i Afshar.⁶⁹

In 1901, the traveler Landor referred to the garden where the various Safavid palaces were or had been situated as a "garden formerly beautiful but semi-barren and untidy now, on a pavement of slabs which are no longer on the level with one another," which also seems to suggest that the *tālār* had already been destroyed by that time.⁷⁰ The American Orientalist Jackson, who visited Isfahan in 1903, did not mention the *tālār* at all when discussing the palace complex, and, a few years later, in 1908, when Eugène Aubin visited Isfahan, he noted that "the Hall of Stables, where Shah Soleiman had been crowned, was nothing but some vacant grounds and piles of rubble, where, at a few locations, some fragments of faience remain."⁷¹ What still existed at that time was the "narrow high-walled roadway" which led from the park in which both the Chihil Sutun and the Talar-i Tavila were situated to the 'Ali Qapu building.⁷² The municipality of Isfahan removed the last remnants of the hall and, on the site of the Talar-i Tavila, which measured 13,000 square meters, built the Madrasa-yi Sa'di in 1925. The first stone was laid on 30 Isfand 1313/March 30, 1924 by the Minister of Education right under the southern entrance of the building.⁷³ This school was in its turn demolished to make room for the Khiyaban-i Ustandari under whose pavement archaeologists will have to dig to map the building's foundations.⁷⁴

Conclusions

In the foregoing we have seen that the Talar-i Tavila was a representative building type of the iwan-*tālār* combination, a new Safavid architectural concept. It consisted of a rectangular design, with an iwan juxtaposed to a *tālār* along the longitudinal axis. The iwan

was higher than the *tālār* and in its rear, on a raised platform, stood the *shāhnishīn*, the shah's throne. The lower *tālār* section fronted the only open side of the iwan, and was itself open on all sides. Four wooden pillars supported its flat roof. The curtains which were let down to protect the users of the hall from the sun, support Babaie's thesis that the origin of the *tālār* must be sought in the use of large royal tents. There were several rooms behind the throne iwan, both at the upper and lower level. Probably in the eighteenth century, a sash window was built on either side of the iwan. Although the Hall of Stables was walled in, to separate it from the royal harem, a private space *par excellence*, the hall itself, just like the other buildings of the iwan-*tālār* type, was freestanding, situated in an open space, in this case a garden, just like a royal tent.

The building was richly decorated with paintings, both figurative and non-figurative, as well as with gilding and lapis lazuli. The lower part of the walls was covered with Tabriz marble, parts of which were also decorated with painted foliage. The iwan and the *tālār* were separated from one another by wooden railings and the lower parts of the *tālār*. The middle section, which was higher than the side areas, contained a pool with fountains in its center. The most likely date of the building's construction is the mid 1630's. However, Chardin's reference to a construction of [part of] the building in the 1560's cannot be ignored, although it probably refers to an adjacent building. This needs more research. Whether seventeenth or nineteenth century, the sources do not agree on the dimensions of the palace. Only archaeological research, by unearthing the foundations of the palace, can resolve these issues.

Although the court also used other palaces for assemblies and audiences, it would seem that the Talar-i Tavila was favored for these official occasions over the others. The ceremonial "running the gauntlet," i.e., having to pass between the rows of soldiers, horses, and other animals, is also peculiar to this palace; as far as I know, it was not part of the entrance to the other audience halls. It is also the only palace that was used for the investiture of a shah (Safi II in 1666) and of two pretenders, who had a shaky claim to the throne and used it to acquire some measure of legitimacy for their rule (in 1732 and 1784).

Although the Afghan usurpers and the last Safavid shah continued to use the Talar-i Tavila as an audience hall, thereafter it was all downhill for the palace. In the nineteenth century it provided lodging for

visiting foreign dignitaries and space for government business, and finally, when it was tumbling down, it was again used as a stable. The building had come full circle. Despite the hall's reputation, it fell victim to Nasir al-Din Shah's policy of ridding himself of cumbersome Safavid palaces, whose upkeep cost him money. By 1900, the Talar-i Tavila was no more. Its rubble, with some remaining faience work, was still to be seen in 1906, but by the time a madrasa had been built on its site in 1925 and then in turn replaced by a road, no trace remained. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

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NOTES

1. Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–42. On the royal textile workshops, which were part of the public area, see Willem Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry in Historical Perspective 1500–1925* (Paris, 1999), pp. 82–92. On the accessibility of the Safavid shahs, also see idem, "The Secular Judicial System in Safavid Persia," *Studia Iranica* 29 (2000): 13–18.
2. The common form "Ali Qapu" (the High Gate) will be used throughout, although in my opinion the Turkish form, Ala Qapı (the Many-colored Gate) is the more correct choice. This is, for example, clear from Qāzi Aḥmad b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī al-Qumī, *Khulāṣāt al-Tawārīkh*, 2 vols., ed. Ihsān Ishrāqī (Tehran, 1363/1984), 2: 604, 607, 623, who refers to the building as Alah Qapi, and from Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung der moscowitischen und persischen Reyse*, ed. D. Lohmeier (Schleswig, 1656 [Tübingen, 1971]), p. 556, who renders it as Allacapi. Other contemporary authors, who confirm this rendering of the name, include Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum Exoticarum. Fasciculi V, Variæ Relationes, Observationes & Descriptiones Rerum Persicarum* (Lemgo, 1712 [1976]), pp. 180, 183 (Ali Kapi); John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia Being Nine Years' Travels, 1672–1681*, 3 vols. (London, 1909–15), 3: 61 (Alacoppe); J. de Thevenot, *The Travels of M. de Thevenot into the Levant* (London, 1686 [1971]) 2: 80 (Aly-Capi); Jean Chardin, *Voyages*, ed. L. Langlès, 10 vols. (Paris, 1811), 9: 226 (Alicapi); John Bell of Antermony, *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to various parts of Asia*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1788), 1: 115 (Alla-capy); F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, 5 vols. (Dordrecht-Amsterdam, 1726), 5: 207 (Aly Capi).
3. Mahvash Alemi, "The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period: Types and Models," in *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires*, ed. Attilio Petruccioli (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), pp. 72–96. On the genesis of the *tālār* as an architectural novelty, see Sussan Babaie, "Safavid Palaces of Isfahan: Continuity and Change (1590–1666)," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1994, pp. 253f., as well as her forthcoming study on "Palaces and Feasting."
4. Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze," pp. 310–11. On the Chihil Sutun, see Sussan Babaie, "Shah 'Abbas II, the Conquest of Qandahar, the Chihil Sutun, and Its Wall Paintings," *Muqarnas* 11 (1994): 125–42.
5. Wilfrid Sparroy, *Persian Children of the Royal Family* (London and New York, 1902), pp. 188–89. It is quite likely that Firaydun Mirza got his poetical inspiration from written sources because he had never seen the hall in its glory days. A likely source is Mīrzā Ḥasan Khān I'timād al-Saltāna, *Mir'at al-Buldān*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'ī and Mīr Ḥāshim Muḥad-dith, 4 vols. (Tehran, 1368/1989), 1: 110f., which provides a summarized Persian translation of Chardin's description of the *tālār*. He may also have read Chardin's account in French, of course. See also Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥasan Khān Jābirī-Ansārī, *Tārīkh-i Isfahān*, ed. Jamshid Mozāhirī (Isfahan, 1378/1999), p. 150, who saw the building as a youth and, although in less verbose and ecstatic language, drew attention to its magnificence and splendor.
6. Heinz Lushey, "Der königliche Marstall in Isfahan in Engelbert's Kaempfer's Planographia des Palastbezirkes 1712," *Iran* 17 (1979): 71–80. Stephen Blake devotes half a page to the Talar-i Tavila in his book on Isfahan, in which he provides a general, short description of the building based on Olearius, Chardin, and Kaempfer, with an estimate of the number of people the building could hold. Stephen P. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* (Costa Mesa, Calif., 1999), p. 66; likewise Babaie, *Safavid Palaces*, pp. 245–50, who, moreover, focuses on the *tālār* as a distinguishing architectural feature rather than on the building itself. Arthur M. Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, *A Survey of Persian Art, from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, 6 vols. (London and New York, 1938–39), 3: 1198, devote a few lines to the building.
7. Lutfallāh Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi Āthār-i Tārīkhī-yi Isfahān* (Tehran, 1350/1971), pp. 751–53 (short summary of Tahvil-dar only); Abu'l-Qāsim Rafī'ī Mihrābādī, *Āthār-i Millī-yi Isfahān* (Tehran, 1352/1973), pp. 80, 380 (just acknowledges the existence of the building).
8. Blake, *Half the World*, p. 66.
9. H. Dunlop, ed., *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië* (The Hague, 1930), pp. 737–38. Also see Chardin, *Voyages*, 9: 468, for the description of the square building, which had been built during Shah Tahmasp I's reign (r. 1524–76). For a short contemporary description of the so-called king's house, see Thomas Herbert, *Travels in Persia, 1627–1629*, ed. W. Foster (New York, 1929), p. 128. The Dutch word *gaeldery* means gallery, and here may refer to the porch or the *tālār* of the 'Ali Qapu.
10. Chardin, *Voyages*, 9: 471.
11. Muḥammad Ma'sūm b. Khvājagī Isfahānī, *Khulāṣat al-Siyar*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran, n. d. [ca. 1992]), p. 245.
12. *Tārīkh-i Bizhan* (Bizhan's History of Rustam), British Museum Add. 7655, fol. 77a (after the rubric for Yunt'il 1050). At my request Dr. Alexander Morton (SOAS) was kind enough to check this source for possible references to the Talar-i Tavila, and his help and kindness are very much appreciated.
13. Chardin, *Voyages*, 9: 471 (the text continues with a description of how the building had been embellished for the coronation).
14. Engelbert Kaempfer, *Am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs (1684–*

- 85). *Das erste Buch der Amoenitates exoticae in deutscher Bearbeitung*, ed. Walter Hinz (Leipzig, 1940), pp. 165–66.
15. A. Hotz, *Reis van de gezant der O. I. Compagnie Joan Cunaeus naar Perzië in 1651–1652* (Amsterdam, 1908), pp. 47–48.
 16. Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, pp. 165–66; see also Chardin, *Voyages*, 7: 371. For more and detailed information, see Lushey, "Der königliche Marstall," pp. 71–80, including a ground plan of the palace complex; also see Blake, *Half the World*, p. 59, map 5, for a very simplified ground plan.
 17. Isfahāni, *Khulāsa*, pp. 249–50 (in 1046/1636–37); Muḥammad Yūsuf, *Dhayl-i Tārīkh-i 'Ālamārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, ed. Suḥayl Khvānsārī (Tehran, 1317/1938), p. 203 (in 1047/1637–38). The dates are conflicting, but both sources describe the same event. Babaie, *Safavid Palaces*, p. 249, n. 12, only mentions Isfahāni, and surmises that evidently another Talar-i Tavila existed near the Zayanda Rud.
 18. Chardin, *Voyages*, 9: 468.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 469.
 20. *Ibid.*, 7: 371.
 21. Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung*, p. 509. On the introduction of Dutch paintings and painters into Iran at that time, see Willem Floor, "Dutch Painters in Iran during the 17th Century," *Persica* 8 (1979): 145–61.
 22. Hotz, *Reis*, p. 151; for the decoration of the Shiraz governor's palace, see *ibid.*, p. 90.
 23. Chardin, *Voyages*, 7: 372; 9: 469–71.
 24. Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, pp. 165–66.
 25. Babaie, *Safavid Palaces*, p. 246, n. 5.
 26. Muḥammad Muḥsin Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-Tavārīkh*, ed. Bīhrūz Gūdarzī (Tehran, 1375/1996), p. 161.
 27. Olearius, *Vermehrte neue Beschreibung*, p. 509; Isfahāni, *Khulāsa*, p. 294.
 28. Isfahāni, *Khulāsa*, pp. 253, 290, 297; Babaie, *Safavid Palaces*, p. 249, n. 14, and p. 250, n. 17, quoting the *Khuld-i Barīn* (in 1048/1638–39); *Tārīkh-i Bīzhan*, fol. 77a (in 1050/1640), fol. 79b (1051/1641); Yūsuf, *Dhayl-i Tārīkh*, pp. 248 (in 1051/1641), 255 (in 1052/1642).
 29. Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Isfahān*, p. 149. Jābirī-Anṣārī's compatriot Muḥammad Mihdī b. Muḥammad Rizā al-Isfahānī, *Nisf-i Jahān*, ed. Manūchīhr Sitūda (Tehran, 1340/1961), p. 34, although two generations earlier, drew the same wrong conclusion.
 30. Hotz, *Reis*, p. 151.
 31. Muḥammad Tāhir Vaḥīd Qazvīnī, *'Abbās-nāma*, ed. Ibrāhīm Dihgān (Arak, 1329/1950), pp. 312, 315; Hotz, *Reis*, p. 151.
 32. Chardin, *Voyages*, 9: 467.
 33. F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, 5 vols. (Dordrecht and Amsterdam, 1726), 5: 254.
 34. Mīr Muḥammad Sa'īd Mushīzī Bardsīrī, *Tadhkira-yi Šafavī*, ed. Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Parīzī (Tehran, 1369/1990), pp. 31, 625, 632.
 35. Jean Aubin, ed., *L'Ambassade de Gregorio Pereira Fidalgo à la cour de Chah Soltan-Hosseyn 1696–1697* (Lisbon, 1971), pp. 57, 75–77.
 36. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, 5: 256.
 37. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Zayn al-'Ābidīn Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i Shāhri-yārān*, ed. Muḥammad Nādir Naṣīrī Muqaddam (Tehran, 1373/1995), pp. 19, 32, 56, 94, 174.
 38. Cornelius Le Bruyn, *Travels into Moscow, Persia and Part of the East-Indies*, 2 vols. (London, 1737), 1: 197.
 39. Bell, *Travels*, 1: 115–19. On the purpose and result of the embassy itself, see P. P. Bushev, *Posol'stvo Artemiya Volinskogo v Iran v 1715–1718 gg.* (Moscow, 1978).
 40. Bell, *Travels*, 1: 128.
 41. Willem Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721–1729* (Paris, 1998), p. 163.
 42. Floor, *Afghan Occupation of Persia*; Muḥammad Muḥsin Mustawfī, *Zubdat al-Tavārīkh*, p. 161; Rizāqulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tārīkh-i Rawzat al-Safā*, 10 vols. (Tehran, 1339/1960), 8: 534; Muḥammad Mihdī b. Muḥammad Rizā al-Isfahānī, *Nisf-i Jahān*, p. 251.
 43. Muḥammad Šādiq Musavī Nāmī Isfahānī, *Tārīkh-i Gīgūshā*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī (Tehran, 1363 Sh./1984), p. 263. The self-styled king enjoyed his new station in life only four and a half days; then Zand troops attacked Isfahan, entered the Talar-i Tavila, and killed him right there. 'Abbās Iqbāl, ed., *Rūznāma-yi Mirzā Muḥammad Kalāntar-i Fārs* (Tehran, 1325/1946), p. 85.
 44. William Hollingberry, *A Journal of Observations Made during the British Embassy to the Court of Persia in the Years 1799, 1800 and 1801* (Calcutta 1814; rpt. Tehran, 1976), pp. 66–67. "These and Saditabad, are the only palaces of the many former kings of Persia, that are in good condition," *ibid.*, p. 68.
 45. A. Dupré, *Voyage en Perse fait dans les années 1807, 1808, 1809*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1819), 2: 131–32.
 46. Lt. Colonel Johnson, *A Journey from India to England through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland and Prussia in the Year 1817* (London, 1818), pp. 106–10, 113–14.
 47. *Ibid.*, pp. 106–7.
 48. T. Lumsden, *A Journey from Meerut in India to London in the Years 1819 and 1820* (London, 1822), p. 117.
 49. Mirzā Šālīh Shīrāzī, "Safarnāma-yi Isfahān va Kāshān va Qom va Tīhrān," ed. Īraj Afshār in *Mīrāth-i Islāmī-yi Īrān*, 7: 262.
 50. Muḥammad Hāshim Āsif, "Rostam al-Hokamā," *Rostam al-Tavārīkh*, ed. Muḥammad Mushīrī (Tehran, 1348/1969), pp. 72–73, 169. Āsif also mentions that behind the Talar-i Tavila built by 'Abbas I, Ashraf Sultan Ghilza'i (r. 1725–29) had a building constructed (p. 197).
 51. R. M. B. Binning, *A Journal of Two Years' Travel in Persia, Ceylon, etc.*, 2 vols. (London, 1857), 2: 109–10.
 52. H. Brugsch, *Die Reise der K.K. Gesandtschaft nach Persien 1861–1862*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1863), 2: 64.
 53. Comte de Panisse, *La Russie, la Perse, l'Inde—souvenirs de voyage 1865–1866* (Paris, 1867), p. 169.
 54. Augustus H. Mounsey, *A Journey through the Caucasus and the Interior of Persia* (London, 1872), p. 185.
 55. Al-Isfahānī, *Nisf-i Jahān*, p. 34.
 56. Ernst Höltzer, *Persien vor 113 Jahren*, ed. Muḥammad Assemī (Tehran, 2535/1976), p. 16. Some repairs were made on Safavid buildings such as the Hazar-Jarib (in 1854–55), the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan (in 1854–55 and 1883–84), the 'Ali Qapu (in 1881–82), and to what is referred to generically as government buildings (*anbiyā-yi dīvānī* and *'imarāt-i dīvānī*) in 1853–54 and 1881–82. Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān I'timād al-Saltana, *Kitāb al-Āthār va'l-Mā'athir* (Tehran, 1306/1884), pp. 60, 64, 65, 76, 80.
 57. Mirzā Ḥusayn Khān Tahvildār, *Jughrāfiya-yi Isfahān*, ed. M. Sitūda (Tehran, 1342/1963), p. 22.
 58. Auguste Lacoïn de Vilmorin, *De Paris à Bombay par la Perse* (Paris, 1895), p. 241.
 59. R. G. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols. (London, 1890), 2: 36.

60. H. d'Allemagne, *Du Khorasan au Pays de Bakhtyaris*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1911), 4: 64.
61. F. Sarre, *Denkmäler Persischer Baukunst*, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1901–10).
62. Sparroy, *Persian Children*, pp. 191–92. According to Mumtāḥin al-Dawla, *Khātirāt*, ed. Ḥusaynquli Jānshaqāqī (Tehran, 1353/1974), p. 120, Zill al-Sultan first had given the building to Mirza ʿAbd al-Wahhab Shatir-Bashi. He also mentioned that the palace was known as *Tārīkh-i Jahān*.
63. Binning, *A Journal of Two Years Travel*, 2: 103.
64. E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 3rd ed. (London, 1970), p. 219 (Browne does not mention the Talar-i Tavila at all, although he mentions other palaces).
65. T. S. Anderson, *My Wanderings in Persia*, 2 vols. (London, 1880), 1: 183.
66. Aḥmad Majd al-Islām Kirmānī, *Tārīkh-i inqilāb-i mashrūṭiyat-i Irān*, ed. Maḥmud Khalīlpūr, 3 vols. (Isfahan, 1347/1968), 1: 129–30. On this policy, see Willem Floor, *A Fiscal History of Iran in the Safavid and Qajar Periods* (New York, 1999), p. 340. For the current location of some of the faience of the Talar-i Tavila, see Lushey, "Der königliche Marstall," pp. 78–79.
67. Murtaẓā Mudarris Chahārdihī, *Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn va Andāshay-i Ū* (Tehran, 1353/1974), p. 107; also reproduced in Majd al-Islām, *Tārīkh*, 1: 130, n. 2. The latter also adds that all but one of Zill al-Sultan's top officials were involved in the destruction of the Safavid buildings (ibid., vol. 1: opposite p. 131 [on the back of the picture]). In 1902, Amin al-Sultan, the grand vizier, sent Sani'-i Nizam, a Tehrani architect, to Isfahan with the task of selling the remaining unimportant buildings and repairing the important ones. Majd al-Islām witnessed the subsequent destruction, of which he disapproved (see his detailed description of the ʿImarat-i Sadri), ibid., p. 131.
67. Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Muṣāhibī Nāʿīnī, "Guzārish-i Amākin-i Tārīkhī-yi Isfahān az Sāl-i 1351 qamarī," in *Maqālāt-i Tārīkhī*, ed. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, 5 vols. (Qom: Al-Hadi, 1376–78/1997–99), 5: 303–04. The list of destroyed buildings, drawn up by Mirza Nasrallah Khan, had been published earlier in *Nāma-yi Armaghān* in 1338/1919–20.
68. Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Isfahān*, p. 232.
69. H. Landor Savage, *Across Coveted Lands*, 2 vols. (New York, 1903), 1: 323.
70. E. Aubin, *La Perse d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1908), p. 286; A. V. Williams Jackson, *Persia Past and Present: A Book of Travel and Research* (London, 1909), pp. 262f.
71. F. B. Bradley-Birt, *Persia: through Persia from the Gulf to the Caspian* (Boston, 1910), p. 282.
72. Jābirī-Anṣārī, *Tārīkh-i Isfahān*, pp. 150, 232–33.
73. Lushey, "Der königliche Marstall," p. 78.