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- 1 Scholars of Safavid history, and specifically those interested in the reign of Šāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, are all intimate with Laurence Lockhart's *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia*. However, as Rudi Matthee points out rightly in the preamble of this article, the historiographical terrain for this period has changed considerably in terms of source material and theoretical approaches with regards to state decline and devolution since Lockhart first published his work some fifty years ago. To this end, Matthee uses a wealth of Russian and Dutch sources to provide a comprehensive and detailed examination of one of the main political players for this period: the vizier Fath 'Alī Ḥān DāĒestānī. The author divides his treatment into three broad sections. The first is a thorough recounting of the early career of this Caucasian administrator and his ability early on to secure influential appointments as *mīr šikār bāšī* (Master of the Hunt), governor of Kūh-i Gilūya, and *qullar āqāsī* (commander-in-chief). His rise to power, along with his brothers Aslamas Beg (later titled as Aṣlān Ḥān) and Kalb-'Alī Ḥān, brought him into direct conflict with the incumbent vizier, Šāh Qulī Ḥān Zangane. Employing Dutch V.O.C. archival records, we learn how Fath-'Alī Ḥān manipulated the hysteria and disorder of a grain hoarding scandal in 1714-15 to discredit Šāh Qulī Ḥān and his family.
- 2 Here, Matthee begins his second section which details Fath-'Alī Ḥān's career as grand vizier from 1127/1715 to 1133/1720. Much of this narrative focuses on Fath-'Alī Ḥān's

increasing brinkmanship, and various anecdotes from Dutch and Russian factors and trading agents concur that this was an administrator who was capable of bringing hard-nosed tactics to the negotiating table. Nonetheless, European and Persian sources alike are in agreement regarding his rapacity, and Matthee notes that such cupidity only intensified lurking accusations regarding Fath-'Alī Ḥān's crypto-Sunnism. The third and final section focuses on Fath-'Alī Ḥān's fall from grace in 1133/1720. Matthee compares traditional accounts (Ma'rashi Safavi's *Majma' al-tavârikh*; *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*) of these developments, but it is his introduction of some new ones (most notably Florio Beneveni, an Italian in the service of the Russians) which provide a fuller, and arguably more accurate, picture of Fath-'Alī Ḥān's dismissal and his subsequent blinding. As a result, the popular version of Fath-'Alī Ḥān planning to effect a coup d'état in partnership with his nephew and governor of Lār and Bandar 'Abbās, Luṭf-Allāh Ḥān, becomes less tenable, and we are led to believe that the grand vizier was a victim of court intrigue and machination at the hands of his rivals. Matthee concludes by suggesting that the rise and fall of Fath-'Alī Ḥān sheds valuable light on networks of power, and how the typical binary construct of Turkmen-Tajik used to describe typical Perso-Islamic court politics was replaced by one of eunuchs and Georgians.

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Thèmes : 4.2.1. Safavides et Qājārs

nompropre Safavides

AUTEURS

COLIN MITCHELL

Dalhousie University – Halifax