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- 1 Szuppe prefaces her work by stating that the Persian medieval sources are by and large silent regarding the role and activities of women, and the scant, available evidence we do have is dedicated exclusively to the discussion of elite female personalities associated with the court. Having said this, this article nonetheless is a lively presentation of issues of gender in the Safavid court, and how noblewomen were able to negotiate and occasionally overcome doctrinal and cultural obstacles. The author begins her analysis by commenting on the relative high standing that women enjoyed in Turco-Mongol traditions, and how the sanctity of royal lineage, the foundational principle to the Turkic notion of corporate sovereignty, could result in high political stations for noble women. In terms of the Safavid court, these Turco-Mongol customs were very much in play during the heyday of Turkic-Qizilbash culture in the 16th century, and Szuppe uses contemporary European accounts (Membrè, d'Allesandri) to point out how Safavid women participated in processions, public ceremonies, etc. Of course, daughters, nieces and cousins were political commodities as they were married off to secure alliances and partnerships with any number of groups (foreign princes, dignitaries, local rulers, Sufi shaykhs). Fascinatingly, Szuppe flushes out a number of Safavid-era sources which bring information to bear on the education and training of

young female noblewomen, most notably the *Šaraf nāma* by Bidlisī and *Javāhir al-‘ajā’yib* by Faḥrī Haravī.

- 2 The second half of the article focuses on Safavid politics and military matters, and how certain women filled crucial roles of leadership during the 16th century. Not surprisingly, the focus of the attention here is on Parī Ḥān Ḥānum II and Ḥayr al-Nisā Begum (Mahd-i ‘Ulyā), two of the most important female political personalities known during the Safavid era. Both managed to supercede traditional boundaries and assume leadership roles during the discombobulated rule of Ismā‘il II and Muḥammad Ḥudābanda. Ḥayr al-Nisā Begum was clearly the more impactful of the two as she engineered the promotion of a number of Širāzī administrators (she and her husband Muḥammad Ḥudābanda had been in Širāz prior to his accession in 1578) and the appointment of a number of Māzandarānī kinfolk to the *dīvān* and chancellery during her short but intense regency in 1578-79. This article is a useful English contribution to the field, and supplements this author’s other work on this particular topic (“La participation des femmes de la famille royale à l’exercice du pouvoir en Iran safavide au XVI^e siècle”, *Studia Iranica*, 1994, and 1995).

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Thèmes : 4.2.1. Safavides et Qājārs

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