

## Topic Page: [Safavid](#)

Summary Article: **Safavid**

from *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(säfä'wēd), Iranian dynasty (1499–1736), that established Shiite Islam in Iran as an official state religion. The Safavid state provided both the territorial and societal foundations of modern Iran. Founded by Shah Ismail, this Turkic-speaking dynasty claimed descent from a Shiite Sufi order. Shiite views, propagated with the help of clerics recruited from Jabal Amil (today in Lebanon) and Iraq, endowed Iran with an identity distinct from its Sunni neighbors. The consolidation of Safavid rule was completed during the reign of Shah Abbas I. Recognizing his military inferiority vis-à-vis the Ottoman Sultanate, Abbas accepted the Ottoman occupation of the western parts of his domain and was thus able to concentrate his efforts on creating a standing army and halting Uzbek incursions from the east. He established Isfahan as his capital and transformed it into an architectural showcase. The strategic location of Iran and Safavid animosity toward the Ottomans, who were a continuing threat to European powers, generated European interest. Shah Abbas received numerous European legations and, with the help of English warships, conquered Hormoz, the Portuguese colony at the entrance of the Persian Gulf. His project to create a major competing maritime trade center at Bandar Abbas failed. Benefiting from a change in the balance of power, he expanded into Ottoman territory, annexing the holy Shiite cities of Karbala and Najaf. A period of upheaval followed his death, during which Ottoman pressure from the west and Mughal attacks from the east led to substantial territorial losses. Abbas II (1642–66) attempted to eliminate bureaucratic corruption, and gained a peace, largely due to the military exhaustion of Iran's neighbors. Husayn (1694–1722, see Sultan Husayn) devoted his energy to reconquering the island of Bahrayn, ignoring the opposition centered in Afghanistan. In 1722, Afghan forces entered Isfahan and forced Husayn to abdicate, putting an effective end to Safavid rule. The final blow came in 1736 when the Afshar Nadir, regent of young Abbas III, deposed him, becoming shah himself (see Nadir Shah).

See Lockhart, L. , *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty* (1958);

Munshi, I. , *History of Shah Abbas the Great* (1978);

Savory, R. , *Iran under the Safavids* (1980).

### **APA**

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Safavid. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/safavid>

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

"Safavid." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/safavid>. Accessed 25 May 2019.