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**Research Paper**

## **The Analysis of Scripts on Safavid Coins using Iconographical Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Iconology is a type of scientific study in which the worldview of the creation era of visual works is determined. This type of cultural studies includes the description of the visual patterns of the work (pre-iconography), the introduction of the narrative or narratives that are observed in the work (iconography analysis) and finally the interpretation of iconology. The purpose of this study is to examine the written content engraved on Safavid coins using the iconographic analysis method. To fulfill this purpose, all the texts engraved on Safavid coins are described, and then, using the method of iconography or iconography analysis, the narratives about these texts are stated. Moreover, the iconographic analysis of the written content engraved on Safavid coins shows some of the political, cultural and religious developments of this era, such as the position of Hamza Mirza, the son of Shah Muhammad, in the developments of Safavid era, the religious approach of Ismail II, the continuity of Safavid position in Iran's internal developments after Afghan invasion, and the high position of Shiite religion and the Persian language during Safavid era.

**Keywords:** Iconography, Coins, Safavid, Shiite, Persian language.

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## 1. Introduction

Iconology research is a part of cultural history studies in which the historical, social and cultural background of visual arts topics and foundations are investigated. In this type of research, the reflection of social and historical values considering arts, beyond the formal and aesthetic aspects, are studied. In iconology studies, "history of culture" and "history of art" are related to each other (Nasri, 2012: 16). Iconology is administered based on the findings of iconography studies. The purpose of iconography is to describe the subject and content of the artwork, while the purpose of iconology is to explain the icon. (Nasri, 2012: 8)

The founder of iconology research method is Aby Warburg. He believed that the analysis and study of the artworks of each period requires mythology and the knowledge of literature, history, and social and political life of that era, and just examining the aesthetic and formal values of arts is not enough for such investigations because the art of any civilization is related to its different areas. (Nasri, 2012: 10) Therefore, in such researches, works of art found the ability to be considered as "valuable historical documents" (Abdi, 2011: 30). Also, flourishing of Warburg's opinions can be seen in Ervin Panofsky's study approach. (Nasri, 2012: 10) Considering reading and examining the semantic layers of the artwork, Panofsky states three stages:

1. Pre-iconographical description, in which only the description of tangible forms of artwork, such as line, color, surface, composition, etc. is discussed (Nasri, 2012: 12).

2. Iconographical analysis in which the theme of the work, the story(s) and the characters present in it are introduced. (Farhangpour, 2000: 77) In this section, the metaphoric relationship between the visual appearance of an icon and what is conventionally attributed to it from outside the visual text, is examined based on the various texts (visual or written texts) remaining from the era of each work. (Etamadi, 2017: 53) In other words, iconography tries to examine the content of the work, regardless of its form, so that it can be decoded from the icons. (Nasri, 2012: 14).

3. Iconographical interpretation, in which the effect of interpretation and worldview of the era in which that work was created is

defined.

During the three mentioned stages, all the aspects of an artwork are investigated and thus the work is completely criticized and analyzed to help understand its historical sense. (ref: Farhangpour, 2000: 77) Thus, first the iconography of the texts on Safavid coins was administered and in this regard all the texts engraved on the coins of this period including the names and titles of kings, places of minting, religious rites and other phrases will be described. In the second stage, which is iconography analysis, the narratives that the texts engraved on these coins contain, will be expressed, and in this way, other historical sources, such as written sources, coins of other rulers of Iran, etc., will be used. Based on the written content engraved on Safavid coins, it is possible to narrate some of the events and developments of their era, such as "establishment of Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of the state and nation of Iran", "Safavid interest in attributing to Ahl al-Bayt", "strengthening Persian language as the official language of Safavid government and Iranian people", "Ismail II approach towards Shiism", "the position of Hamza Mirza, the son of Shah Muhammad in the developments of the era of Muhammad Khodabandeh", and finally "the continuation of the nominal rule of some members of Safavid family after Afghan invasion and the official end of Safavid rule".

Regarding the background of the research, it should be said that so far, several researches have been conducted on the coins of Safavid period, and the most important ones are mentioned. The book "Coins of Safavid Period" written by Farzaneh Qaieni includes the description and introduction of the types of coins minted during Safavid period. In a part of the book "Coins of Iran from the Beginning to Zandiyeh Era" authored by Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Fareydoon Avarzmani, names and titles of Safavid kings engraved on the coins and their mints are introduced. In a part of the book "Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum", descriptions of Safavid coins in the British museum are presented. In the book "Coins of Iran, Collection of Coins of Malek National Museum and Library from Achaemenid period to the end of Pahlavi period" authored by Seyed Ali Asghar Shariatzadeh, a number of Safavid coins are introduced and the words engraved on them are

quoted. In a part of the book "Research on Coins and Seals of Safavid Era" written by Soghara Esmaili, the mints and coins of Safavid era have been examined. In the article "The Process of Change in the Imprints (Images and Religious Mottos) on the Coins Minted in Safavid Period" authored by Jahanbakhsh Sawaqib, Shahab Shahidani and Siavash Amrai (History of Iran after Islam, No. 12), the process of change in the imprints (images and religious mottos) on the coins of Safavid period and their attitude towards engraving images and religious mottos have been investigated, while comparing these coins with the coins of Ilkhanate and Timurid period. The article "the influence of Shiite beliefs and teachings on the adornment of Safavid era coins" written by Farzad Faizi, Saeed Satranjad and Karim Hajizadeh (Jandishapour, No. 8) is about the influence of religious ideology on Safavid coins.

However, the important difference between the present research and the introduced researches is that the analysis of Safavid coin written content in this research was done using the iconographic method, and thus, an attempt

has been made to investigate Safavid coins using a new method in the research.

## 2- Pre-iconography

Pre-iconography includes the description of the visual patterns of the work and its identification information. (Farhangpour, 2020: 77) Considering that the subject of the present research is the examination of written content of Safavid coins, this section is solely devoted to the description of variety of phrases engraved on Safavid coins.

On Safavid coins, the names and titles of the kings, in the form of sentences that convey their devotion and affiliation to Shiite Imams, as well as the date of minting and the name of the city where the coin was minted, are engraved. Since the time of Shah Abbas II (1052 -1077A.H.), most of the titles and cognomens have been written in the form of Persian poems. (Sarfranz and Avarzmani, 2010: 244) Moreover, the calligraphic hands used to write on the coins of the early Safavid kings was Naskh and then Nastaliq. (Sarfranz and Avarzmani, 2010: 244; Qaieni, 2016: 91)

**Table No. 1 - Engraved texts on Safavid coins (Sarfranz and Avarzmani, 2010: 244, 245-247; Qaieni, 2016:111-162; Shariatzadeh, 2014: 255-266; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum,1887: 1-49 & 54-62)**

| King's Name             | Written Content on the Coin   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Ismail I (907-930 A.H.) | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Bahadour Khan Khald Allah Malkeh  |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Bahadour Khan Khald Allah Ta'ala Malkeh va Sultana  |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana  |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Bahadour Khan Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana  |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Bahadour Khan Safavi .....Malkeh  |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Wali Bahadour Khan Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana   |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Bahadour Khan Al-Safavi Al-Hosseini Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana   |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Bahadour Khan Al-Safavi Al-Hosseini Khald Allah Malkeh  |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Sultan Ismail Bahadour Khan Al-Hosseini Khald Allah Malkeh  |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Shah Ismail Bahadour Khan Al-Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh   |
|                         | Sultan Abul Muzzafar Ismail Shah Bahadour Khan Khald Allah Malkeh   |
|                         | Sultan Al-Adel Al-ghazi fi Sabile Allah Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Khald Allah Malkeh  |
|                         | Sultan Al-ghazi fi Sabile Allah Abul Muzzafar Ismail Bahadour Khan Khald Allah  |
|                         | Adl Shah Ismail (It is mostly seen as a re-minting (Overprint) on Qara Qoyunlu coins minted by Shah Ismail.)<br>Call on Ali, who is the embodiment of strange qualities, so that he will be your helper in times of difficulty, call on to remove any discomfort from you, and to your guardianship, Ali, Ali, Ali <sup>1</sup> |

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
|                                       | <p>Help from God and a nigh victory Give thou good tidings to the believers, You<br/>         Mohammad<sup>ii</sup><br/>         Justice<br/>         Al-Adel</p> <p>Whoever turned to the truth was survived (It is mostly seen as a re-minting<br/>         (Overprint) on Qara Qoyunlu coins minted by Shah Ismail.)<br/>         Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail<br/>         Sultan Shah Ismail<br/>         Shah Ismail Al-Safavi<br/>         Mint location</p>   |
| Tahmasp I (930-984 A.H.)              | <p>Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Tahmasp<br/>         Bahadour Khan Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Ghazi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Sultan Tahmasp<br/>         Bahadour Khan Al-Safavi Al-Hosseini Khald Allah Ta'ala<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Abul Muzzafar Shah Tahmasp Bahadour<br/>         Khan Khald Allah Ta'ala Malkeh va Sultana<br/>         Sultan Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Abul Muzzafar Shah Tahmasp Bahadour Khan Al-<br/>         Safavi Al-Hosseini<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Tahmasp Al-<br/>         Safavi Al-Hosseini Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Shah Tahmasp<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali<br/>         Imam Reza<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Qoulam of Ali ibn Abie Talib Abul Muzzafar Al-Hosseini<br/>         Qoulam of Imam Mahdi Alayhe Al-Salam Sultan Al-Adel Abul Muzzafar Shah<br/>         Tahmasp Al-Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Adl Shah Tahmasp<br/>         Mint location</p> |
| Ismail II (984-985 A.H.)              | <p>Sultan Al-Adel Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Al-Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail Al-Safavi ibn Tahmasp shah Al-<br/>         Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Abul Muzzafar Shah Ismail ibn Tahmasp Al-Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         From east to west, if there are imams in all lands<br/>         Ali and his companions are enough for us</p>   |
| Mohammad Khodabanda (985-996 A.H.)    | <p>Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Sultan<br/>         Mohammad Bahadour Khan ibn Tahmasp Khald Allah Ta'ala Malkeh<br/>         Sultan Al-Adel Abul Muzzafar Sultan Mohammad ibn Tahmasb Al-Hosseini<br/>         Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Sultan Mohammad Khodabanda Qoulam of Ali ibn Abie Talib<br/>         Qoulam of Imam Mahdi Alayhe Al-Salam Al-sultan Al-Adel Abul Muzzafar<br/>         Sultan Mohammad Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Qoulam of Imam Mohammad Alayhe Abae Al-Salam Sultan Abul Muzzafar<br/>         Mohammad shah Khan ibn Tahmasp Al-Hosseini Khald Allah Malkeh<br/>         Qoulam of Imam Ali ibn Abie Talib Alayhe Al-Salam Al-Adel Abul Muzzafar<br/>         Sultan Mohammad Khodabanda Khald Allah Malkeh</p>  |
| Hamza (992-993 A.H.)                  | <p>Sultan ibn sultan ibn sultan Hamza Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana</p>  |
| Abbas I (996-1036 A.H.)               | <p>Fortunately, this coin was minted by title of Kalb<sup>iii</sup> Ali, Abbas<br/>         Servant of King of lands Abbas Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana va Ala Al-<br/>         Alamin Berh va Ihsaneh<br/>         Servant of King of lands Abbas Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana va Adl va<br/>         Ihsaneh<br/>         Servant of King of lands Abbas<br/>         Mint location</p>  |
| Safi I (1038-1052 A.H.)               | <p>Servant of King of lands Safi<br/>         He is the servant of the king from the heart and mind<br/>         Mint location</p>   |
| Abbas II (1052-1077 A.H.)             | <p>Abbas II is Kalb Ali<br/>         Servant of King of lands Abbas II<br/>         In the whole world, the Sahebgharan coin of Abbas II<br/>         In the whole world, the one who minted the Sahebgharan coin<br/>         By God's blessing, wrote Kalb Ali, Abbas II<br/>         Mint location</p>  |
| Safi II (Suleiman I) (1077-1105 A.H.) | <p>For education and satisfaction of young and old, A new Sahebgharan coin was<br/>         minted in the name of Safi<br/>         For education and satisfaction of young and old, A gold coin was minted with<br/>         the name of Suleiman Jahan</p>   |

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
|                                   | <p>After Abbas II, a new Sahebgharan coin is minted in the name of Safi</p> <p>When I accepted Ali into my heart out of love, the whole world came under my command</p> <p>Servant of King of lands Suleiman<br/>Religion King of lands Suleiman<br/>Servant of King of lands Safi<br/>In the world after Shah Abbas II<br/>Sahebgharan coin is minted</p> <p>For the pilgrims of the Imam of Hearts and Souls, a new Sahebgharan coin is minted in the name of Safi</p> <p>Mint location</p>  |
| Sultan Hossein I (1105-1135 A.H.) | <p>Kalb Ali, Hossein</p> <p>The inferior Kalb of Amir al-Mu'minin, Soltan Hoseyn</p> <p>The owner of the new coin became Sultan Hossein, Kalb Amir al-Mu'minin, thanks to the grace of the Lord of the East</p> <p>By God's blessing, the name of Sultan Hossein religious was minted on the gold coin</p> <p>Servant of King of lands Hossein</p> <p>Sultan ibn Sultan va Khaleghan ibn Khaleghan Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana<br/>Sultan ibn Sultan Bahadour Khan Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana<br/>Heir of King Suleiman Jahan, Sultan Hossein</p> <p>Sultan Al-Adel Al-Hadi Al-Kamel Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Shah Sultan Hossein<br/>Sultan Al-Adel Al-Kamel Al-Hadi Al-Wali Abul Muzzafar Sultan ibn Sultan<br/>Shah Sultan Hossein Bahadour Khan Al-Safavi Khald Allah Malkeh va Sultana</p> <p>Place and date of minting</p> |
| Tahmasp II (1135-1144 A.H.)       | <p>By God's grace, coins are minted from Khorasan with the support and help of religion Shah Ali Musa al-Rida</p> <p>On solid gold Tahmasab II minted coin, "There is no sword but the Zulfiqar, and there is no Hero but Ali"</p> <p>In the whole world, Sahibqarani coins are minted with the name of Tahmasab II</p> <p>Servant of King of lands Tahmasp II<br/>Qoulam of religion King Tahmasp</p> <p>Place and date of minting</p>  |
| Ahmed (1138-1141 A.H.)            | <p>Coins are minted for seven countries, earth and sky, King Ahmed became the heir of King Sulaiman</p>  |
| Abbas III (1144-1148 A.H.)        | <p>By God's grace, coins are minted from Khorasan with the support and help of religion Shah Ali Musa al-Rida</p> <p>By the grace of God, a coin was minted in the world to become a source of inspiration for the people in the name of Abbas III Sahibgharani</p> <p>Place and date of minting</p>   |
| Sām (1157-1160 A.H.)              | <p>A gold coin was minted in the world in the name of King Suleiman's heir, Sam ibn Sultan Hossein</p> <p>Servant of King of lands Sam ibn Sultan Hossein</p>  |
| Soleiman II (1162-1163 A.H.)      | <p>By God's grace, a coin was minted in the name of just King Suleiman II</p>  |
| Ismail III (1163-1169 A.H.)       | <p>Servant of King of lands Ismail<br/>Sultan Ismail Khald Allah Malkeh</p> <p>Place and date of minting</p>   |
| Soltan Hossein I (1166 A.H.)      | <p>He has command from the king of all, the son of Shah Tahmasab, Hossein Sani</p>   |
| Mohammad II (1200 A.H.)           | <p>By the grace of God, a gold coin was minted in the name of Sultan Muhammad</p>  |

On the back of Safavid coins, the phrases of *Shahada*, Ali Wali Allah, the names of the twelve Imams (peace be upon them) or several imams (peace be upon them) are written in the margin and rarely the name of the mint. (Sarfranz and Avarzamani, 2010:247; also see: Shariatzadeh, 2014: 255-266; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 1887: 1-62) Also, in some coins of Ismail I, in addition to the above expressions, the word "Name Ali, who is the embodiment of strange qualities, so that he will be your helper

in times of difficulty, call on to remove any discomfort from you, and to your guardianship, Ali, Ali, Ali" is also engraved on some coins. (Shariatzadeh, 2014: 255,256; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 1887: 8)

The names of the cities that were engraved on Safavid coins as mints are: Amol, Abarquo, Abiward, Ardabil, Urdu, Ordubad, Estrabad, Ashraf, Isfahan, Yerevan, Barforosh Deh, Badlis, Bastam, Baghdad, Behbahan, Tabriz, Torbat, Tarshiz, Tbilisi, Toon, Tehran,

Tamijan, Jafarabad, Khazaneh, Damghan, Damavand, Doreq, Deylaman, Ramhormoz, Rasht, Zanjan, Sari, Saveh, Sabzevar, Sarkhs, Semnan, Shamakhi, Shushtar, Shiraz, Shirvan, Foman, Qaen, Qazvin, Qom, Kandahar, Qumis, Karjian, Kazroon, Kashan, Kerman, Ganja, Lar,

Lahijan, Lasht-e Nesha, Mazandaran, Merv, Mashhad, Naeen, Nakhjovan, Nahavand, Nishabour, Nimruz, Herat, Hamadan, Hoveyzeh, Yazd. (Sarfranz and Avarzamani, 2010: 248)

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <br>Ismail II        | <br>Tahmasp I                 | <br>Ismail I            |
| <br>Shah Safi I      | <br>Abbas I                   | <br>Mohammad Khodabanda |
| <br>Soltan Hoseyn I | <br>Shah Safi I (Suleiman I) | <br>Abbas II           |
| <br>Sām            | <br>Abbas III               | <br>Tahmasp II        |
|   | <br>Ismail III              | <br>Soleiman II       |

Table No.2- Coins of Safavid Kings (source: <https://www.zeno.ru>)

### 3- Iconography

The analysis of iconography or iconography is the introduction of the narrative or narratives that can be seen in the artwork. This is done by using visual or written texts left over from the era of the work so that the mentioned artwork can be decoded.

#### 3-1- The reflection of Twelver Shiism on Safavid coins

The most obvious issue about the texts engraved on Safavid coins is the reflection of

Twelver Shiism in some of these texts. Such texts can be divided into several categories:

1- The words "Ali Wali Allah" and the names of the twelve Imams (peace be upon them) or several imams (peace be upon them) can be seen on all Safavid coins. (Sarfranz and Avarzamani, 2010:247; also see: Shariatzadeh, 2014: 255-266; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum,1887: 1-62) This kind of expressions can be seen on some coins of rulers before Safavid era, although in terms of the amount of use of these

expressions, it is not comparable to Safavid era, which is not surprising. Because Shah Ismail I Safavid, the founder of Safavid government, immediately after the establishment of Safavid government made Twelver Shiism the official religion. In this way, honoring Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and eleven other Imams became common. (Roemer, 2006: 258) This issue is considered the most important decision of Shah Ismail I. In fact, Twelver Imami Shiism was one of the foundations of Safavid leaders' power and the most important factor in their religious propaganda and political ideology. (Savory, 2008: 26)

It should be noted that the words "Ali Wali Allah" and the names of the twelve imams (PBUH) can also be seen on some other works of art created during the period between the rule of the Ilkhans and the establishment of Safavid dynasty. For example, we can mention some of these artworks. The first example is a metal candelabrum from the era of Uzun Hasan Aq Qoyunlu, where the names of the twelve

Imams (peace be upon them) are engraved in the form of inscriptions or calligraphy, and it is considered to be a sign of his support for Shiite beliefs. (ref.: Shaistefar, 2005: 123) Another example is the engraving of the names of the twelve Imams (peace be upon them) in the form of great Salavat<sup>iv</sup> in the chest of Imamzadeh Yahya in Tehran (with the date 895 A.H.), and also the inscription of Toon mosque (current Ferdous) dated back to 885 AH.) In an inscription dated 897 A.H. in Mehrjan, Yazd, the word "Ali Wali Allah" is also silvered. (ref: Jafarian, 2009: 850, 851 and 852) It should be mentioned that such Shiite rituals can be seen in the works of Timurid period, including in the inscriptions of this era. As an example, the phrase "Ali, Ali, Ali" was one of the common prayers addressed to Imam Ali (AS) in many religious buildings built in Timurid period, such as Goharshad mosque in Mashhad, Amir Chakhmagh mosque in Yazd, Khargerd Ghiasieh school and the Jame mosque in Varzaneh can be seen. (Shaistefar, 2005: 109)

| name of government     | The name of the ruler         | Shiite rituals |  |                           |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|--|---------------------------|
|                        |                               | Ali Wali Allah | The names of the twelve Imams (peace be upon them) | Names of some other imams |
| Ilkhanate              | Abaqa Khan                    | *              |  |                           |
|                        | Arghun                        | *              |  |                           |
|                        | Ghazan                        | *              | *  |                           |
|                        | Mohammad-e Khodabande Öljaitü | *              | *  |                           |
|                        | Togha Temür                   | *              | *  |                           |
| Ilkhanate till Timurid | Ali Safi Qome family          | *              |  |                           |
| Jalayirid Sultanate    | Shaikh Hasan Buzurg           |                | *  |                           |
| Timurid                | Abul-Qasim Babur Mirza        | *              |  |                           |
| Sarbadars              | Hassan Damghani               | *              | *  | *                         |
|                        | Ali Moayed                    | *              | *  |                           |
| Marashiyan             |                               | *              | *  | *                         |
| Kar-Kiya dynasty       |                               | *              | *  |                           |
| Turkoman Qara Qoyunlu  | Jahan Shah                    | *              | *  |                           |
|                        | Hasan Ali                     |                | *  |                           |
|                        | Espand                        | *              |  | *                         |
|                        | Alexander                     | *              | *  |                           |
| Aq Qoyunlu             | Uzun Hasan                    | *              | *  |                           |

|                     |                           |   |   |  |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| Turkoman Aq Qoyunlu | Jacob ( <i>Ya 'āqōb</i> ) | * |   |  |
|                     | Rostam                    | * | * |  |
|                     | Morad                     | * |   |  |
|                     | Alvand                    | * | * |  |
|                     | Mohammad                  | * | * |  |

Table No. 3 - The expressions "Ali Wali Allah" and the names of the twelve Imams (peace be upon them) on the coins of Iranian governments from the Ilkhanate period to the

establishment of Safavid government (Shahmoradi, 2020: 199-206, 242-257, 265-280 and 295-314; Shariatzadeh, 2014: 245)







|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <br>Oljaitu coin/Ali Wali Allah and blessings be upon the Prophet and the twelve imams (Alaeldini, 2016: 174)     | <br>Ghazan coin/Ali Wali Allah (Alaeldini, 2016: 107)   | <br>Arghun coin/Ali Wali Allah (Alaeldini, 2016: 85)   |
| <br>Kar-Kiya coin/name of Imams (peace be upon them) and Ali Wali Allah (Astan Quds Razavi coin treasure)        | <br>Marashiyani coin/Ali Wali Allah (Astan Quds Razavi coin treasure)  | <br>Ali Moayed Sarbdari coin / Ali Wali Allah and blessings be upon the Prophet and the twelve Imams (Torabi Tabatabai, 2535: 15) |
| <br>Metal candlestick/ Aq Qoyunlu period/Name of the Twelve Imams (peace be upon them) (Shaistehfar, 2005: 129) | <br>Uzun Hasan coin/Ali Wali Allah and the names of the 12 Imams (peace be upon them) (Torabi Tabatabai, 2535: 169) | <br>Hasan Ali Qara Qoyunlu coin/name of twelve imams (Torabi Tabatabai, 2535: 18)  |

Table No. 4 - The words "Ali Wali Allah" and the names of the twelve imams (AS) on some coins and works of art during the period between the Ilkhanate period and the establishment of Safavid dynasty.

2- The affiliation of Safavid to Shiism and its imams is reflected in Persian poems on their coins. Among these items are some coins of Ismail II, Abbas II, Safi II (Suleiman I), Hossein I, Tahmasb II, Abbas III and Hossein II. (ref: Sarfraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245-247; Qaeni, 2016: 124, 140, 148 and 154; Shariatzadeh, 2014: 260; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 1887:

29,34, 40-42, 54, 61, 62) Shia poetic literature has been observed in Iran since the period after Ilkhanate, but the emergence and reflection of this type of literature, which indicates Shia affiliation, is observed on coins for the first time during Safavid period and it had no history before Safavid era, which is interesting in its own way.

The existence of works with Shiite style and context in Persian literature is one of the reasons for the presence of Shiite ideas among Iranians. (Jaafarian, 2009: 750) One of the most important works of this type is Shia poetic literature. Persian Shia literature is reflected in



the works of Sunni poets of the 7th century. (ref: Jafarian, 2009: 676-677) During the 8th and 9th centuries, Shia and Sunni poets appeared in Iran, whose poems were dedicated to expressing the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt. (ref: Jafarian, 2009: 865-873) Poems of some unknown poets of the Shiite religion have been quoted since the 8th century, which can be an indication of Persian Shiite literature in this period. (ref: Jafarian, 2009: 756-760)

3- The devotion of Safavid kings to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) is reflected on some of their coins in the form of some phrases like "Qoulam of Ali ibn Abie Talib", "Kalb Ali", "Kalb Astan Ali" and "Kalb Amir al-Mu'minin". Among the cases of the first phrase (Qoulam of Ali ibn Abie Talib) are coins of Tahmasb I and Muhammad Khodabandeh. The second phrase (Kalb Ali) is also engraved on some coins of Abbas I and Abbas II. The third phrase (Kalb Astan Ali) can be seen on some coins of Hossein I. The fourth phrase (Kalb Amir al-Mu'minin) is also engraved on some other coins. (Sarfaraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245 and 246; Shariatzadeh, 2014: 260; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 15,20,29,40,41,42,49,54)

In addition to these cases, some coins of Safavid sultans have also been engraved with the words "Servant of King of lands". Some of the coins of Abbas I, Safi I, Abbas II, Safi II (Suleiman I), Hussein I, Tahmasab II, Sam and Ismail III are among these. (Sarfaraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245-247; Qaieni, 2016: 128, 130, 136 and 141; Shariatzadeh, 2014: 260-262 and 266; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 1887: 22,23,25,29,30,33,34,37,39,43,45,46)

It should be mentioned that in some of the coins of Ismail I, the prayer of Nad Ali Saghir: "Call on Ali, who is the embodiment of strange qualities, so that he will be your helper in times of difficulty, call on to remove any discomfort from you, and to your guardianship, Ali, Ali, Ali" is printed. (Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 1887:8; Qaieni, 2016: 111; Shariatzadeh, 2014: 255 and 256) These expressions, which indicate the position and virtues of Imam Ali, were inspired by the Messenger of God, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) on the day of the battle of Uhud. (Majlesi, BeTa, vol. 20: 73; Sepehr, 2006, vol. 2: 902) It should be mentioned that the text of Nad Ali Saghir prayer is included in the margin

of a letter from Safavid period belonging to Shah-Begi Begum known as Tajlu Begum, the daughter of Mehmud Beyk ibn Hamza Beyk Bektash Mosul, related to Astana Qom in 929 AH. (Tabataba'i Madrasi, 1982: 133) Additionally, Tomb stone belonging to the date of 1036 AH. existed in Gorgan stone museum, on which Nad Ali Saghir prayer is engraved. (Matofi, 2008;433)

4- Finally, it is necessary to mention that the phrase "Qoulam of Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him)" is also seen on some coins of Tahmasb I and Muhammad Khodabandeh. (Qaieni, 2016: 116 and 125; Sarfraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 1887: 19) In the coins of Shah Abbas II, Imam Zaman is mentioned as "Al-Mahdi" and "Muhammad Al-Mahdi" (Qaieni, 2016: 133).

It is important to mention that despite the belief of some western scholars that Safavid sultans claimed to be the representative of Imam Zaman, there is no sign of this claim on the coins of Safavid. As mentioned, the words "Servant of Imam Mahdi" are engraved on the coins of Tahmasb I and Muhammad Khodabandeh, and the names of the twelve imams (peace upon them) are engraved on other Safavid coins. (Serafraz, 2014: 103)

### 3-2 -Attribution of Safavid to Ahl al-Bayt

On the coins of some Safavid kings, their names are described with the words "Al-Safavi Al-Hosseini" or "Al-Hosseini". Among these sultans are: Ismail I, Tahmasb I and Muhammad Khodabandeh. (Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 1887: 10,11,15,18; Sarfraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245; Shariatzadeh, 2014: 258; Qaieni, 2016: 116 and 125)

This indicates that Safavid rulers wanted to reflect their Alevi and Sayyid title in the rituals engraved on some of their coins. The representation of this aspect of Safavid life can also be seen in the historical sources of Safavid period. In these sources, genealogies are mentioned that trace the lineage of Safavid to the seventh Imam, Imam Mūsá al-Kāzīm ibn Ja'far (peace be upon him). (ref: Khand Mir, 2001, Vol. 4: 409-410; Skanderbeg Manshi, 2003, Vol. 1: 7; Vahid Qazvini, 2004: 21) It is obvious that such an origin from the aspect of religious (Shia) legitimacy, which was considered to be the determining factor, helped

Safavid' claims in the matter of monarchy. (Roemer, 2006: 265) However, this genealogy has been questioned since that time as well as in later times. (Roymer, Roemer: 265; Mazavi, 2009: 126) One of the reasons for this issue is the emphasis of the sources of Safavid period, that is, after Safavid gained power, on this point. In this regard, it has been said that because Safavid made Shiism the official religion, they also claimed the succession of the twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him). Therefore, in order to strengthen this belief, it was necessary to attribute them to Ahl al-Bayt. (Navaei, and Ghaffari Fard Abbasqoli, 2007: 33) In fact, considering their effort to consolidate and expand their power in Iran, they ordered court historians to include the claim of Safavid supremacy in their works. (Mazavi, 2009: 122) It can be said that Safavid from that era, in order to consolidate the belief that they are attributed to Ahl al-Bayt, while recording this belief in the written works of their era, also took action to engrave the title "Al-Hosseini" on their coins in order to spread and consolidate this belief strongly.

However, the point that should be pointed out about the deep expansion of Shi'ism during Safavid era (which is also indicated by the reflection of the rituals of this religion on Safavid coins) is that the beginning of this process was long before Safavid era. Moreover, considering the invasion of Mongols and the rise of Ilkhanate, a new era began in the religious and cultural relations of Iran. The fall of Khwarazmian, who claimed to be the head of the Islamic world, the collapse of the Ismaili system, which had a universal goal, as well as the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate system, which considered itself the spiritual leader of the Islamic world, and finally the chaotic situation in Iran during this period caused the Twelver Shiites to find a suitable opportunity to emerge. (Bayani, 2008: 236) It should be stated that, what has made this issue a golden opportunity for the Shiites was "the policy of non-prejudice of the Ilkhans towards religion" (Mirjafari, 2005: 164). Therefore, during the era of Ilkhanate, Shiites sought to promote their religion more actively. This issue went to the point where they wrote about Ghazan Khan: "When he examined all the Islamic religions, he adopted the Shia religion for all." (Kashani, 2005: 99) More important than this issue is the official conversion of Sultan Muhammad

Khudabandeh to Imami Shiism (Kashani, 2005: 100). Thus, he is the first Shiite king who promoted Twelve Imam Shiism on a wide level. Historians of the early Safavid period are aware of the fact that the path of conversion of Iranians to Shiism was widely and politically from the era of Mohammad Khodabandeh Ilkhani and usually, in mentioning the actions and efforts of Shah Ismail Safavi to spread Shiism, Muhammad Khodabandeh is also mentioned. (Jaafariyan, 2009: 694) The strengthening of Shiism continued in the period after Ilkhanan. Despite the formality of Sunni religion during Timurid era, the Shiites were also a group worthy of attention. The Shiites were the special attention of Timur and he was interested in meeting their needs (Mirjafari, 2005: 166). To the extent that Timur's Shiite tendencies have been mentioned in this regard (Mirjafari, 2005: 61). It can be said that during Timurid era, Shiites left their position of weakness against Sunni religion and freely followed their beliefs and promoted them. (Mirjafari, 2005: 167) The continuation of the growing process of the expansion of Shiism during the era of Turkoman Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu can also be clearly seen. Qara Qoyunlu were very interested in the Shia religion, as it is mentioned that they entered the "extremist issues of Shia" and it has been said that they were the pioneers of Safavid in trying to establish unity based on Shia ideals. (Mirjafari, 2005: 328) In the case of Turkoman Aq Qoyunlu, although the officiality of the Sunni religion has been mentioned in their era (Mirjafari, 2005: 328), it should be said that there are documents that indicate the Shiite interests and tendencies of this family among them are the existence of coins with full Shiite style and motto from sultans of Aq Qoyunlu. (ref: Torabi Tabatabai, 2535: 21)

### **3-3- Reflection of Persian language on Safavid coins**

Among the interesting points about Safavid coins are Persian poems engraved on their coins.<sup>vi</sup> Previously, some Persian poems were mentioned on the coins of Safavid sultans, which indicated their affiliation to the Shia religion and its imams. However, it should be said that the poems engraved on Safavid coins are not only limited to religious poems, but some of these poems were written in the description of Safavid kings and reflected on

their coins. Since the era of Abbas II, most of the titles have been written in the form of Persian poems, which is one of the interesting innovations of the coins of this era in the history of Iran, which did not exist in the pre-Safavid era because Persian poems have not been seen on the coins of previous Iranian dynasties. It should be mentioned that the lines engraved on Safavid coins are Naskh and Nastaliq calligraphic hands (Sarfranz and Avrzamani, 2010: 244; Qaieni, 2016: 91).

Persian language entered a new period of its life in Iran after the Mongols. With the arrival of the Mongols, the writing of Arabic poetry, which was customary before, began to decline, and only religious and philosophical books were usually still written in Arabic. Timurid era was also the beginning of the new era of literature and the new style of Safavid era was founded in this period. The most important literary feature of this era was the popularization of poetry. (Mirjafari, 2005: 154 and 155) Timurid wrote in Persian and respected Persian poetry and also supported court poetry. The historical sources of Timurid era as well as the scientific works of this era, such as the mathematical and astronomical works of Ulugh Beg era, were written in Persian. (Roemer and others, 2000: 146 and 147)

Chardin, the European traveler of Safavid era, writes that Iranians believe that Persian is the natural and ethnic language of them. He also describes the Persian language as "the language of poetry and literature of the people". (Chardin, 1993, Vol. 3: 946) In fact, the language of writing and literature in this era was Persian, and letters and correspondence were written in this language. Therefore, the poems, slogans, and titles on the coins are all written in Persian, which was considered the official language. (Qaieni, 2016: 93) This point shows that Persian language was established as a national and official language in Safavid era, and Safavid sultans also paid attention to its expansion.

As Roemer has pointed out, the most important conditions of Iran in the new era originate from Safavid era, which includes the use of Persian as the official language and the belief in the Shiism of Twelve Imams in the current geographical territory of Iran. (Roemer, 2006;430) It can be said that the foundations of the national identity of Iranian in the new

period are mainly based on the two factors mentioned, which were formalized in Safavid period. The signs and symbols of both factors are evident on the texts engraved on Safavid coins. Shia rituals are engraved on Safavid coins in a broad and absolute manner, which is unprecedented considering the previous era, to represent the strong belief of Iranian in Twelver Shia religion. Persian language is also widely seen on Safavid coins, so that the use of this language on the coins of this period cannot be compared to previous periods.

### **3-4 -Religious approach of Ismail II**

One of the interesting points about the rituals engraved on Safavid coins is the motto engraved on some coins of Ismail II. These words consist of the verse: " From east to west, if there are imams in all lands, Ali and his companions are enough for us." (Sarfranz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245; Qaieni, 2016: 124) Based on the narratives of the historical sources of Safavid era, this phrase refers to one of the important events of this era, namely the religious approach of Ismail II.

According to Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi, Ismail II was inclined towards the Sunni religion, and in this way, he reduced the influence of Shia scholars and also ordered the cursing of the three caliphs to be stopped. However, he adjusted his policy sometime later. At this time, Ismail II ordered new coins to be minted. He believed that since the words "There is no God but Allah, Mohammad is the Messenger of God, Ali Wali Allah" are engraved on the coins and these coins fall into the hands of non-Muslims and also the common people touch these holy names, so it is better to engrave other phrases instead of the aforementioned phrases on the coins so that it does not appear unpleasant for the general public. However, he was afraid that his action would be interpreted as Ismail II trying to remove the words "Ali Wali Allah" from the coins. Accordingly, after a lot of reflection, he ordered that the mentioned words be engraved on the coins. (Skanderbeg Manshi, 2003, Vol. 1: 213-217)

Other sources of Safavid period have also narrated similar narrations with differences. The author of Naqawat Al-Athar writes that Ismail II ordered new coins to be minted and the aforementioned verse written on them because common people and non-Muslims

touch the name of God and the Messenger of God (PBUH), which is out of politeness. He writes that the Imamiyyah scholars objected to this, but it was not useful. He then writes that because Ismail II, like his predecessor, did not respect the scholars, they hated him and believed in his bad faith in Shiism. (Afoshetaie, 1994: 41)

Based on the report of author Riyaz al-Fardous Khani, due to Ismail II's opposition to curse Aisha, the people thought that he had converted to Sunni religion until Sunni religion was revealed and Shiites were also unable to take actions because of his arrogance. He then narrates that during the minting of the new coin of Ismail II, he believed in removing the words "Ali Wali Allah" because he believed that the coins, on which these words are engraved, would fall into the hands of the public and non-Muslims. However, he was afraid of being accused of being a Sunni man because of doing this act, until he decreed that the verse, "From east to west, if there are imams in all lands, Ali and his companions are enough for us.", be engraved on the coins. (Mohammad Mirek Hosseini, 2006: 409)

In Tarikh-e Jahan-ara-ye Abbasi, it is also stated that due to Ismail II's favoring of Sunni religion, Qizilbash became suspicious of him and Sunni were also valuable until he reconsidered his previous behavior to remove the created suspicions and engraved the stated verse on the coins. (Vahid Qazvini, 2004: 82)

It worth mentioning that in the letter sent by Shah Ismail I to Shayabak Khan Uzbek, in which Ismail I's reasons for promoting Shiism are stated, the aforementioned verse is written. (ref: Hosseini Qomi, 2004, Vol. 1: 105)

### **3-5- Coins minted with the name of Hamza Mirza, the son of Shah Mohammad**

One of the interesting points about Safavid era coins is the minting with the name of Hamza Mirza, the son of Mohammad Khodabandeh. (ref: Sarfraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245) This is interesting because the coins were minted with the name of the ruling king and not the children or even the crown princes of Safavid sultans. To explain this, it is necessary to examine the developments during the reign of Mohammad Khodabandeh.

During the reign of Muhammad Shah, his wife, *Mahd-e Olia*, was in full control of the country. She decided to make her beloved son,

Hamzah Mirza, the successor of her husband. During this period, relations between *Mahd-e Olia* and Mirza Salman, the minister of Mohammad Shah and the father-in-law of Hamza Mirza, became hostile with Qizilbash and led to the murder of both of them by Qizilbash. After the murder of Mirza Salman, Hamza Mirza, who was now nineteen years old, took over the administration of the country, but he lacked the necessary political experience and competence to run the country. Therefore, he himself was caught in the categories of Qizilbashan until he conducted a military campaign to Karabakh in 995 A.H. and he was murdered in a mysterious way. (ref: Savory, 2008: 68-72)

Roemer believes that the reign of Mohammad Khodabandeh did not have a positive point for Iran because he lacked an effective monarchy due to his blindness and did not pay attention to the administration of government affairs. Therefore, during his time, the power fell into the hands of other actors and the Shah was placed on the sidelines of the government in such a way that apparently foreign observers had never been aware of his existence. He writes that this point is deduced from the fact that sometimes in the list of Safavid sultans, instead of the name of Muhammad Khudabandeh, the name of his son Hamza Mirza is mentioned as the king, while in reality he never became the king. (Roemer, 2016: 335)

Despite the truth of Roemer's statement that Hamza never actually ascended to the throne and also the truth of the fact that Hamza's name was never mentioned as one of Safavid kings (ref: Bosworth, 2002: 530; Navaie and Ghafari Fard, 2007: 151-161; Savory, 2008: 68-72), but it should not be overlooked that coins with Hamza Mirza's name were minted, and more importantly, he was mentioned as "Al-Sultan ibn Al-Sultan ibn Al-Sultan Hamza" in these coins. (ref: Sarfraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 245) Emphasizing the title "Sultan" several times in these coins can be considered as a sign of the claim that although Hamza never officially ascended to the throne, he was in practice responsible for the duties of the king. Especially because his father Muhammad Shah, despite his apparent reign, could never become a real king.

### 3-6 -Coins of kings after Sultan Hossein

The life of Safavid dynasty officially ended with the domination Afghans over Isfahan, however, several other members of this family continued to bear the name of a king in the later era and coins with their names were minted. They were, Tahmasab II, Ahmad, Abbas III, Sam, Suleiman II, Ismail III, Hossein II and Muhammad II. (ref: Shariatzadeh, 2014: 264, 265 and 266; Catalogue of coins of the shahs of Persia in the British museum, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62; Sarfraz and Avarzamani, 2010: 246 and 247; Qaieni, 2016: 147-161) It seems that for a long time after the fall of Safavid dynasty, various rulers, whenever they needed, would put one of the members of Safavid family in power just by name, while the real rule of Safavid ended with Shah Tahmasb II. (Bosworth, 2002: 533) It can be said that the so-called "sympathy and compassion" of Iranians towards Safavid (Roemer, 2006:426), as well as the strength and credibility of its institutions (Savory, 2008:253), caused the ghost of that government to disappear long after the real decline of this dynasty (invasion of Afghans in 1135 A.H.). Coins minted in the era after Shah Sultan Hossein with the names of people from Safavid family are proof of this claim.

### Conclusion

Examining the texts of Safavid coins based on the iconographic method, in addition to describing all the expressions engraved on their coins, provides narratives of some developments of their era, which can be used as a complement to the narratives of historical sources. Among these is the poem engraved on the coins of Ismail II, which indicates his religious policy, which is mentioned in the written sources of historiography. Moreover, another case is the minting of coins with the name of Hamza Mirza, the son of Mohammad Khodabandeh; while, generally, the coins are minted with the name of the king and not the crown princes or other members of the royal family. The minting of such coins can be considered as the indication of Hamza's role in the era of Khodabandeh, who was actually in charge of the kingship, although he did not officially hold this royal position. The title "Al-Hosseini" in some coins of Safavid also shows that they emphasized the spread and strength of their rule among the common people, as they

engraved it on some of their coins. The continued minting of Safavid coins in the period after Afghan invasion, which is considered the official end of this rule, can be considered as an indicator of the strength of Safavid' position in the minds of the Iranian people, as different emirs and rulers had to keep one of the members of Safavid family as a name in the position of royalty and rule in his name in order to gain legitimacy. More important than the mentioned points, is the reflection of Twelver Imam Shiism and also Persian language on Safavid coins. The affiliation of Safavid to Shiite religion is widely reflected on their coins. This matter is engraved in the form of written contents on Safavid coins, such as "Ali Wali Allah", the name of the twelve Imams (peace be upon them), Qoulam of Ali ibn Abie Talib, Kalb Ali, Kalb Astan Ali, Kalb Amir al-Mu'minin, Servant of King of lands, Qoulam of Imam Mahdi, the prayer of Nad Ali Saghir and also, some Persian poems have been engraved on Safavid coins in commemoration of Ahl al-Bayt. Additionally, during Safavid era, Persian language was used in their coins with a much greater extent than in the previous era, which shows the position and strength of this language for Safavid government and the people of Iran. The strengthening of Shi'ism and the Persian language began in Iran during Ilkhanate era and its result was evident during Safavid era and became two important pillars of Iranian national identity until modern times. In sum, it should be noted that Safavid were aware of the promotional role of coins that were exchanged throughout the territories under their control and even outside of it. To this end, they tried to advertise their desired symbols and slogans among the public people like other governments.

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i نَادِ عَلِيًّا مَظْهَرَ الْعَجَائِبِ تَجِدُهُ عَوْتًا لَكَ فِي النَّوَائِبِ كُلِّ هَمٍّ وَ غَمٍّ

سَيَنْجَلِي بِوَلَايَتِكَ يَا عَلِيُّ يَا عَلِيُّ يَا عَلِيُّ

ii نَصْرًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحًا قَرِيبًا ۖ وَبَشِيرًا لِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

iii dog

iv praise and greetings of God to Mohammad and his descendants

v These poems are mentioned in table No. 1.

vi These poems are mentioned in table No. 1.

