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## Written Representation of Temporal Power in Safavid Material Culture

*This paper examines the notions of Shi'ism and kingship in Safavid cultural materials (coins, architectural inscriptions, enthronement orations, and panegyrics) to trace the role of Safavid ideology in the dynasty's transformation from a Sufi order into a monarchic institution with a sectarian identity. It examines these materials in order to reconstruct the dominant ideology of the Safavids in various venues. Examination of the ideologies of Safavid rulership shows a marked difference between ideologies expressed in these cultural mediums. We argue that this difference points to a multi-pronged Safavid strategy of projecting political legitimacy in distinct registers for different audiences. By combining ideologies that were embraced and practiced by people of different regions and sects in the Persian empire before the Safavids, the Safavid monarchs managed to spread widely their power within the empire and beyond, to change the religio-political ideology of the empire, and to remain in power for more than two centuries.*

**Keywords:** Safavid Dynasty; Shi'ism; Ideology; Legitimacy; Cultural Material; Safavid Coins; Architectural Inscriptions; Enthronement Orations; Panegyrics

### *Introduction*

Safavid ideology, rooted in multiple cultures, has intrigued and inspired scholars since the mid-1950s. These scholars, many of whom studied the origins of Safavid Shi'ism in Iran, include Klaus-Michael Rohrborn, Hans Robert Roemer, Alessandro Bausani, H. A. R. Gibb, and Michel Mazzaoui. Additionally, scholars such as Roger Savory, Andrew Newman, Kathryn Babayan, Sholeh Quinn, Azfar Moin, Sussan Babaie, Kishwar Rizvi, and Colin Mitchell, among many others, have examined representations of Safavid ideology, the dissemination of Safavid power among the masses,

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and the legitimization of the dynasty from different perspectives and in various contexts. Alessandro Bausani examined the relationship between Sufism and Shi'ism under Mongol rule in Iran in the *Cambridge History of Iran*. Mazzaoui examined the shared culture between Islamic mythology, Shi'i *ghulāts*,<sup>1</sup> and mystic groups pre-dating the Safavids. Kathryn Babayan concentrated on the origins of Safavid Shi'ism. She explained the religious and cultural hybridization in premodern Iran as evident in symbols and coded language of the Safavids. She argued that the Safavid culture was responsive to two dominant cultural systems: pre-Islamic Persianate culture and the Islamic-Alid belief system. Thus, Safavid cultural materials and poetry demonstrated that the Safavid monarchs appreciated both “mythistory” and the icons of Islamic prophecy and Shi'ite hagiography. *Mythistory* is a term that W. H. McNeil used to refer to the Achaemenian and Sasanian periods; Mitchell used it to refer to the relationship between Safavid and pre-Islamic Persian kings. Colin Mitchell argued that imperial and pre-Islamic Persian icons stood side by side as the greatest figures of Shi'i narrations. King Darius, Jamshīd, and Anūshīrāvān appeared along with the Prophet Muḥammad, Imam 'Alī, and Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq for legitimizing purposes. This is not in itself surprising. During the medieval Islamic period, Uzbeks, Mughals, Ottomans, and even the Timurids compared themselves to the mythical heroes and historical kings of Iran praised in *Shāhnāmeḥ* (Book of Kings) while emphasizing their own pious character in line with Sharī'a. In the case of the Safavids, the kings were expected to rule on behalf of the imams (twelve imams descending from the Prophet Muḥammad) and to keep the Shi'i traditions alive. In addition to this trilateral foundation of the Safavid ideology (i.e. pre-Islamic Iranian kingship, Abrahamic Prophetic traditions, and imami hagiography), the Safavids benefited from Turkic and Mongolian elements of sovereignty (particularly the idea of *ṣāhib-qirān*),<sup>2</sup> which could help

<sup>1</sup>*Ghulāt* refers to the group whose ideas were considered *ghuluww*. *Ghuluww* is derived from the Arabic root “gh-l-w,” meaning “to exceed the proper boundary.” The use of the term is problematic. It has been used pejoratively to refer to individuals with extreme and unorthodox views on the nature of intercessors between man and God. “The Ghulāt envisaged divinity as incarnated in human, with each believer an earthly god who is able to connect with the holy personally through prophetic inspiration, illumination, or permeation. They believed in the dual and yet integrated existence of spirit and matter and in the human potential to transcend matter and access the divine while on earth.” Also: “Exaggeration refused to separate heaven from earth; in fact, for some, heaven exists on earth, and it is to earth, they believed, that we keep returning in different forms, thus Muḥammad, 'Alī, Jesus, or Moses could be reincarnated in an individual at any given historical time. This cosmology and ontology embedded in *ghuluww* represents their essential differences from normative Islam and accounts for their being considered heretics by Muslim orthodoxy.” (Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, Introduction). For more information, see Mazzaoui, “The Origins of the Safavids.”

<sup>2</sup>Timūr (d. 1405 CE) was the founder of Timurid Empire in Persia who was known by the title *ṣāhib-qirān* (Lord of Conjunction). Although this title was originally known in Middle Persian and was used before Timūr, it signifies the Timurid model of kingship as it became pivotal to Timūr's imperial-sacral persona. After him, *ṣāhib-qirān* became a central title of all following dynasties developed in the Turko-Mongol and Perso-Islamic world. The implication of the term varies from one culture to another and from its first use onwards. In pre-Islamic Iran the title was for commenting on drinking rituals; in Pahlavi literature it came to refer to the charisma and eulogistic ideas of certain rulers as “world-conquerors” or kings with “great personalities.” During the thirteenth century, the term referred to Iranian con-

them to position themselves as world conquerors similar to Timūr and use their Turkoman tribal clans and kinsmen for military purposes.<sup>3</sup>

This background on Safavid ideology and its shifting legitimacies bring us to the present discussion. Babayan and Quinn, by studying the legitimizing patterns in Shāh Ṭahmāsb's *Tazkireh* and the Safavid chronicles, respectively, were able to further describe the ideological shifts occurring in the Safavids' core concepts. The present study operates from a similar perspective. However, it differs in its focus on ideology as manifested in Safavid cultural materials and poetry. Ideology in this paper refers to the trilateral pillars of the Safavid ideology: presenting the Safavid king as (1) the representative of the Hidden Imam; (2) the shadow of God on earth; and (3) the head of the Safavid Sufi order. By ideology, I mean any discourse related to these three pillars that reinforced the Safavid kingship—the ideas that appeared in different forms and shapes to legitimize this monarchical dynasty as the guardian of Shi'i doctrines in a Muslim community.

This paper argues that the Safavids enacted a multi-pronged strategy projecting a unified political and religious legitimacy in distinct registers for different audiences. This is demonstrated in the benedictions and titles preserved on coins, and Safavid royal seals that mostly emphasize notions of Timurid legitimacy and love for the family of the Prophet. The Safavids' strategy is also evident in several inscriptions on mosques and *madraseshs*. Shi'i legitimacy and expression of love for the family of the Prophet are the most dominant patterns in these materials. Furthermore, orations and notes remaining from the day of enthronements represent a combination of Shi'i legitimacy with comparison between Safavids and pre-Islamic Persian kings. Finally, panegyrics that are dedicated to Safavid kings work towards legitimizing the Safavid power. However, unlike most of the cultural materials of the period, they do not distinguish between a Shi'i and a Sunni ruler. By analyzing these written representations of power, this analysis suggests that there was no shifting legitimacy in Safavid manifestations of power. Nevertheless, Safavid power was disseminated through a combination of various forms of ideology in different places in which the Safavid

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cepts of justice and kingship. In pre-Safavid periods, the title was used to speak of legends such as Amīr Ḥamzeh, the prophet's uncle, who was famous for his military prowess. While *ṣāhib-qirān* is purely astrological and implies the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter (as on the date of Timūr's birth), the title indicates "something from heaven." Timūr applied the term to mystify his roots and genealogy. He claimed direct contact with angels, prophetic visions, and access to the ladder of the sky. He used the term to forge a synthesis between Turko-Mongolian conceptions of authority and the Perso-Islamic connotation of the royal glory. From the late fifteenth century, *ṣāhib-qirān* found a messianic meaning for referring to a reviver, *mujaddid*, or *mahdī*, whom some believed would come and save the world. For example, the Ottoman Emperor Sulaymān (d. 1566), who was called a *ṣāhib-qirān*, was perceived as the awaited Mahdī. In the early fifteenth century, Shah Ismā'il I (d. 1524) was also called *ṣāhib-qirān* and the awaited Mahdī by Khwandmīr. Although the *ṣāhib-qirān* edged towards Mahdism in the political culture of Ismā'il's time, in Shah 'Abbās' time, this term, which had long been Islamicized, was used to celebrate the king's charisma for portraying a victorious king associated with a divine providence. For more information, see Melvin-Koushki, "Early Modern Islamicate Empire," 351–75, and Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction," 13: 91–104.

<sup>3</sup>Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics*, 4–10.

monarchs could be represented. The combination of different ideologies, central to Safavid power, allowed the Safavid monarchs to widely advertise their power throughout Persian empire and abroad, to change the religio-political ideology of the empire and remain in power for more than two centuries.

In the following sections, I analyze representations of Safavid power from four types of cultural materials: numismatic, architectural, royal investiture orations and ceremonies, and panegyrics.

#### *Numismatic Evidence*<sup>4</sup>

Coinage systems are important historical sources for studying the core ideology of any dynasty. Coinage is a public medium. Similar to any forms of art, coinage can also communicate ideas. The titles, benedictions, and iconography of specie illustrate how each king was perceived during his rule. Tracing the changing titles on the Safavid coins reveals distinct differences among each Safavid court's ideology. While obverses of coins from the courts of some Safavid kings reveal grandiose Sunni religious and imperial titles, others display titles portraying servitude to Shi'i imams. Still others feature phrases borrowed from the Timurids. *Ṣāhib-qirān*, which was pervasively known in association with Tīmūr, was widely used by kings after Shah 'Abbās I (d. 1629). Also, after Shah 'Abbās I, the coins present an interest in using rhythmic Persian lines. The title *ṣāhib-qirān* usually appears in a one-line poem. This change suggests that there was a desire among the Safavid kings to distance themselves from Sunni Muslim kingship, and to show more appreciation towards forming a cultural system of kingship specific to the Persian community. The titles of servitude towards the Shi'i imams during the reign of Shah 'Abbās I, and Persian poetry later in the period post-Shah 'Abbās, speak of this interest.

Starting from the beginning of Shah Ismā'il's reign, the obverse of Safavid coins displayed the words of the *shahādāt*. Moreover, the phrase *'Alī valī Allāh* ('Alī is the vice-regent of Allah), and the names of twelve Shi'i imams, also added. When he occupied the throne, Shah Ismā'il adopted the Aq Quynlu (r. 1378–1501 CE)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>My study of the Safavid coins is mostly based on the works of scholars who previously identified them; I also drew heavily from Sughra Ismā'ili and Farzaneh Qa'ini's extensive research on Iran's monetary system during the Safavids, including their comments on the patterns of the coins, the centers involved with the monetary system, the coins' material, and the developments within the coinage system of Iran during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. See Ismā'ili, *Sikkeh-hā wa muhr-hā*, and Qa'ini, *Sikkeh-hā*. Also see Album, *Checklist of Islamic Coins*, where numerous unique coins of Safavid period have been discussed. In addition to these sources, I checked several collections of Safavid coins during my visit to Iran in summer 2016. Malek Museum in Tehran presented a small number of Safavid coins which were mostly minted in Tehran and Lar during the sixteenth century. The museum also uploaded images of some of these coins on their website; the images in this article are taken from there.

<sup>5</sup>This dynasty, famous as White Sheep Turkomans, was a Persianate Sunni Oghuz Turkic tribal federation that ruled from 1378 to 1501 CE in regions that span present-day Armenia, Azerbaijan, Eastern

prototypes with comparable titles and benedictions. To already existing titles such as *al-sultān* (the sovereign), *al-ʿādil* (the just), and *al-kāmil* (the complete), he added titles such as *al-hādī* (the guide), and *al-vālī* (the vicegerent) to introduce himself as the substitute of imams. Shah Ismāʿīl added titles such as *bahādur* (courageous) and *abu al-muẓaffar* (the father of victorious) to underscore his physical power. Titles such as *al-ḥusaynī* and *al-ṣafavī*, which accentuate the religious background of the king, mark the royal inscriptions on his coins (see Figure 1).<sup>6</sup>

The coinage system under Ṭahmāsb (d. 1576) was similar to Ismāʿīl's,<sup>7</sup> but one main change is evident. Expressions of servitude began to appear, which revolved around the king's central goal of reinforcing the idea of ruling in the absence of a Shiʿi imam (see Figure 2). Stemming from this desire, phrases such as *ghulām-e Imām Mahdī* (the servant of Mahdī) and *ghulām-e Imām ʿAlī* (the servant of ʿAlī) were added to titles such as *sultān al-ʿādil* (the just sovereign) phrases. These phrases soon were revoked when Ṭahmāsb's son, Ismāʿīl II (d. 1577), came to power. Iskandar Beyg Munshī mentioned that Ismāʿīl II believed that if a non-Muslim touches a coin, especially the words of *shahādāt*, the coin would be untouchable and equal in status to excrement. Therefore, he ordered the elimination of all Shiʿi expressions and the names of Shiʿi imams from coins.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, in order to demonstrate loyalty to his Sufi family, and to placate Shiʿi religious scholars and the community that practiced Shiʿism, the king ordered the replacement of *ʿAlī valī Allāh* (ʿAlī is the representative of Allah) with a Persian verse: "If there is one imam from West to East / It is ʿAlī and his family who are enough for us" (see Figure 3).<sup>9</sup>

The most marked change to phrases on coins occurred during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās I. Initially, he built his political influence based on that of his father and by negotiating power between religious scholars and people of various cultural groups and religions. However, he soon detached himself from unorthodox religious practices and established his position between the people, the state, and religious scholars by emphasizing Shiʿi doctrines. Piety and subservience to the "true" religion were the best ways for the king to compel ordinary people, the elite, and religious scholars to accept him as the righteous ruler in the absence of an imam and to follow his commands. Shah ʿAbbās' system of reign was very similar to Shah Ṭahmāsb's; however, it was more systematic. By distancing himself from the regular symbols of power in public, and by further announcing his servitude toward Shiʿi imams, Shah ʿAbbās moved the monarchy away from the Safavid past and took serious steps towards increasing the orthodox character of the Safavid dynasty as a Shiʿi state.<sup>10</sup>

Turkey, and the majority of Iran and Iraq. Their power was undermined by the Safavids by the final years of the fifteenth century when Shah Ismāʿīl I defeated them in the battle of Nakhjivan.

<sup>6</sup>Qāʿini, *Sikkeh-hā*, 109.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 116–23.

<sup>8</sup>Musavi Bujnurdi et al., *Tārikh-e jāmiʿ-ye Iran*, 93.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.; also see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 90–106.

<sup>10</sup>Quinn, *Shah ʿAbbās*, 43; and Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 90–106.

Figure 1. Coin of Shah Ismā'īl minted in Astarabad.



ID Number: 5000-06-00741

The sovereign, the just, the guide, the vicegerent, the father of victorious Shah Ismā'īl, the courageous, may Allah preserve his kingdom and his sultanate.

Figure 2. Coin of Shah Ṭahmāsb minted in Sari.



ID number: 5000-06-00801

The phrase “servant of Imām ‘Alī” is on the reverse.

The dominant script on his coins, *bandeh-ye shāh-e vilāyat* (the servant of the king of sovereignty), reflects this transition. This script was institutionalized in Shah ‘Abbās I’s reign and commonplace thereafter.<sup>11</sup> This script, casting Shah ‘Abbās as a mere servant of Shi’ism, foregrounds the king’s Shi’i desires. It linked the Safavid king to Shi’i doctrine and implied obedience to the one and true caliph after the Prophet (i.e. Imām ‘Alī). On the one hand, by connecting himself to Imām ‘Alī, Shah ‘Abbās I and his courtiers were presented as pious retainers of Imām ‘Alī’s instructions and legacies. On the other hand, they presented new views of power and sovereignty,

<sup>11</sup>Qa’ini, *Sikkeh-hā*, 128–9.

Figure 3. Coin of Shah Ismāʿil II minted in Dar al-Muvahhid Qazvin.



ID number: 5000 06 0742

"If there is one imam from West to East / It is 'Alī and his family who are enough for us."

which distinguished them from the other Muslim rulers. For example, Shah 'Abbās was unique as being known for a protective attitude towards his subjects and for supporting the poor against the unfair tradesmen of the time<sup>12</sup> (see Figure 4).

Although historians of Shah 'Abbās' time applied the title *ṣāhib-qirān* for legitimizing purposes, connecting Shah 'Abbās to the conqueror Timūr (d. 1405 CE),<sup>13</sup> Safavid coins do not support this connection. Nevertheless, the connection was made for one of Shah 'Abbās' successors, Shah 'Abbās II. Beginning with his reign, the title *ṣāhib-qirān* (Lord of the Conjunction) appeared on the coins along with the king's name and lineage (see Figure 5).<sup>14</sup> *Ṣāhib-qirān* augured predestined and everlasting success for its fortunate possessor.<sup>15</sup> The expression *sikkeh-ye ṣāhib-qirānī* (the coin of the Lord of the Conjunction) was used in a Persian verse on the reverse side of the coinage, a combination that emphasized ideas of both Persianate and Timurid kingship. Similarly, in other periods, the coins' reverse displayed the names of imams. *Ṣāhib-qirān* stayed on coins during the reign of Ṣafī II, famous as Shah Sulaymān I (d. 1692). Sulaymān did not change the expression, and by invoking his father's name, he applied his father's legitimacy and power to his own kingship:

<sup>12</sup>Tales of his visits to the lower quarters of Isfahan exemplify his style of justice. The French traveler Tavernier narrated the incident in which the shah punished a cheating baker by ordering him to be baked in his own oven. There is another narration about a cheating butcher whom the shah ordered to be roasted to show his justice towards the people whom the butcher did not treat well. There were also stories that framed the king as a hero and a helper. To read more stories about Shah 'Abbās and his attention to regular people, see Marzolph, *Ṭabaqeh bandī*, 1992, under \*947A, 945, 930, \*922, 841, \*844, 40, 724. As defined in these stories, the shah usually bought the products of poor businesspeople (467) to help them or married the daughter of a poor family. Sometimes a dervish promised the poor wife of an unfaithful man that she may bring him back to the path of guidance (844B).

<sup>13</sup>Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 44–6.

<sup>14</sup>Qa'ini, *Sikkeh-hā*, 134.

<sup>15</sup>Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 50.

Figure 4. Coin of Shah ‘Abbās I minted in Duraq.



ID number: 5000-06-00714

Margin: The servant of the King of Sovereignty ‘Abbās.

Figure 5. Coin of Shah ‘Abbās II minted in 1074 AH (1663).



ID Number: 30001-06-00094

By God's help, Shah ‘Abbās II/minted a *ṣāḥīb-qirānī* coin in this world.

به گیتی بعد شاه عباس ثانی  
صفی زد سکه صاحبقرانی

After Shah ‘Abbās II in the world  
it was Ṣafī who minted *sikkeh-ye ṣāḥīb-qirānī*.<sup>16</sup>

The interest in having Persian verses on the coins is specifically evident on the coins that were minted after Ṣafī II's second enthronement in 1668 (see [Figures 6 and 7](#)):

بر تحصیل رضای مقتدای انس و جان  
سکه خیرات بر زر زد سلیمان جهان

<sup>16</sup>Qā'inī *Sikkeh-hā*, 136. Throughout the paper, all translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.



Figure 6. Coin of Shah Sulaymān's era minted in Isfahan.



ID Number: 5000-06-00798

To have the confirmation of [Imām 'Alī] whom human and non-human follows Sulaymān of the world minted gold coins for charity.

Figure 7. Coin of Shah Sulaymān minted in Isfahan.



ID Number: 5000-06-00753

King Central cartouche: The servant of the Sovereignty, minted of Sulayman, in Isfahan. Margin: Since I minted the coin of love for 'Alī on my soul, By God's kindness, the world became obedient to my orders.

To have the confirmation of [Imām 'Alī] whom human and non-human follows. Sulaymān of the world minted gold coins for charity.

سکه مهر علی تا زدم بر نقد جان  
گشت از فضل خدا محکوم فرمانم جهان

Since I minted the coin of love for 'Alī on my soul,  
By God's kindness, the world became obedient to my orders.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 137–40.

Figure 8. Coin of Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn minted in Nakhjavan.



ID Number: 5000 06 00856

The servant of the king of sovereignty Ḥusayn.

The tradition of Persian poetry writing on coins persisted until the fall of the Safavid dynasty. In addition to *bandeh-ye shāh-e vilāyat* and *ṣāhib-qirān*, Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn (d. 1726) retained the Persian poems on his coins.<sup>18</sup> The similarity between the coins' titles during the reign of Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn and the first two Safavid kings suggests an interest in Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn conforming in rule to early Safavid kings and in presentation to Shah Ismā'īl and Shah Ṭahmāsb (see Figure 8).<sup>19</sup>

### *Architectural Evidence*

In this section, I discuss the numerous inscriptions remaining from the Safavid period, especially from Isfahan's buildings. The architectural inscriptions were multicultural in ideology, available to the public residential population as well as to visitors to the Persian empire during the Safavid dynasty. Architectural inscriptions such as those of mosques, domes, and schools are among the materials that support our understanding of the public image of the Safavid kings. These inscriptions also elucidate the dynamics of the kings' search for legitimacy in the eyes of those who convened in those public places. The content of these inscriptions speaks of the Safavid kings' interest in using these materials for dissemination of their religio-political ideology among everyday people. In general, these materials are about the incorporation of terms that portray the king's desire to be affiliated with the family of the Prophet, to express love for Imam 'Alī, as well those that introduce the Safavid kings as the propagators of Shi'i legacies. Although numerous architectural inscriptions from the Safavid period exist, only a few are available from each Safavid court to enable a comprehensive analysis of all religio-political ideologies and legitimacies constituted in these inscriptions. I will

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 140.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

begin with the earliest inscriptions remaining from the Shah Ismā'īl period, and then trace them up to the fall of the dynasty.

The inscriptions on the Hārūn Vilāyat mosque are among the earliest remaining from the time of Shah Ismā'īl I. The inscription on this mosque depicts Shah Ismā'īl as the warrior deserving to be a caliph. Although the inscription implies the religious aspect of his kingship, it also emphasizes his right to kingship because of his power and strength in fighting for truth in the path of God:

في أيام خلافة والى لواء الولاية في الأفاق مالك سرير الخلافة بالاستحقاق الغازى المجاهد فى سبيل الله  
بقاطع البرهان ناصر المؤمنين ابى المظفر السلطان شاه اسماعيل بهادرخان ...<sup>20</sup>

In the [ruling] days of the guardian of the banner of guardianship on the horizon, the entitled owner of the throne of Caliphate, the conqueror in the cause of Allah with a vigorous proof, the patron of the believers, the father of the triumphant, Sulṭān Shah Ismā'īl Bahādūr Khān. believers, the father of the triumphant, sulṭān Shah Ismā'īl bahādūr khān.

Ismā'īl's messianic claims played an important role in forming his sacred authority.<sup>21</sup> Public claims of divination, magic, and prophecy in different stages of his reign helped the social process by which the "sacred" charisma of Safavid kings was produced and institutionalized.<sup>22</sup> As a result, Shah Ismā'īl's qizilbāsh's supporters believed him to be sacred by virtue of being born into a Sufi family. This idea allowed him to gain and keep the respect and trust of his devotees throughout most of his reign. For example, an Italian traveler indicated that Shah Ismā'īl's followers adored him as a prophet and that the rug he sat upon when celebrating Mihrigān,<sup>23</sup> having been touched by the sacred Ismā'īl, was torn into pieces to be used by his followers. European travelers also wrote that Ismā'īl's followers considered him to be divine. Because of his special power and devotees, and especially because of his spiritual genealogy, they regularly compared him with Alexander the Great or with Xerxes and Darius, conveying the same respect for him as for pre-Islamic kings of the Persian empire.<sup>24</sup>

This emphasis on the sacred charisma of Shah Ismā'īl can be seen in the inscription of the 'Ālī Mosque. It mentions that the number of kings' names in the *abjad* system is equal to the times the name of the twelve imams repeated in the Quran is a *karāmat*.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Hunarfār, *Ganjineh-ye āsār*, 361.

<sup>21</sup>Minorski, *The Poetry of Shah Ismā'īl I*, 1006–29.

<sup>22</sup>"Messianic age" is a term that describes the religious history of pre-Safavid Iran through the period in which the norms and rituals of Sufi movements that presented the kings as heaven-ordained saviors and the embodiment of divinity. During his reign, Shah Ismā'īl was occupied with establishing a new religion, seeking ways to distribute Shi'i legacies, and educating the masses in Shi'i rules.

<sup>23</sup>Mihrigān is a Persian and Zoroastrian festival celebrated to honor Mitra, the goddess of love and friendship.

<sup>24</sup>For more information about the image of Shah Ismā'īl among Europeans see Palmira, "The Myth of Shah Ismā'īl Safavi."

<sup>25</sup>*Karāmat* in singular form and *karāmāt* in plural form are the qualities available to *awliyā* (friends of God). *Karāmat* is an action or a quality which contravenes the norms (*nāqiz-i 'adat*) of ordinary life, and

Figure 9. Āli Qāpū Gate in Qazvin.



Thus, the inscription claims the king is sacred and the rightful person to lead the Muslim community:

هذا مسجد ... أسسه في زمان من بيده مقاليد الزمان السلطان بن السلطان الذي إسمه جميل  
بعده الأئمة عليهم السلام في التنزيل أبي المظفر سلطان شاه إسمعيل.<sup>26</sup>

This mosque ... [I] established [it] in the days of him, who holds the keys of time. [He is] al-Sulṭān the son of al-Sulṭān the son of al-Sulṭān. [The value of] his beautiful name, the father of triumph al-Sulṭān Shah Ismā'īl, is equal to the times that the name of the twelve imams, the peace of God upon them, has repeated in the Quran.

As seen on mosque inscriptions of Shah Ṭahmāsb's period, the title *husaynī* was added after the king's name on Quṭbiyyeh and Darb-e Jūbāreh, two mosques of Shah Ṭahmāsb's period, to claim the relationship between the king and the family of the Prophet. The inscription of Darb-e Jūbāreh refers to the king as "the vanguard of Imam Mahdī's army."<sup>27</sup> These titles reinforce the claim that Shah Ṭahmāsb desired to legitimize his rule in the absence of Imam Mahdī.

Shi'i and Sufi genealogy became a dominant element of inscriptions during the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (see Figure 10). The expression "the propagator of the right religion of Twelver Shi'ism" was also engraved. Inscriptions from Maqṣūd Beyg's mosque, which were engraved in 1603, blended the notions of the king's personal characteristics and his material power with notions of Twelver Shi'ism. In this inscription, the king's glory is compared to Jam's while the presence of angels in his army endows the king with sacred charisma similar to Shah Ismā'īl's:

در زمان دولت پادشاه جمجاه ملائک سپاه گردون بارگاه مروج مذهب ائمة اثني عشر صلوات الله  
عليهم من الملك الأكرم الأكبر الأعدل السلطان الأعظم و الخاقان الأكرم أبي المظفر شاه عباس  
الموسوي الصفوي الحسيني<sup>28</sup>

it is available for those who are *sādiq* (truth-teller/honest). *Karāmat* may be enacted by those who are known as *valī* (guardianship/intimate friend). Receiving food upon request from God, passing through the boundaries of place and time, finding water where it was not available before, or hearing a voice from the unseen realm are among the most common *karāmat* ascribed to the friends of God. See Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, 327–9 and Qushayrī, *Tarjumeḥ-ye risāleh-ye qushayrīyyeh*, 622.

<sup>26</sup>Hunarfār, *Ganjīneh-ye āsār*, 372.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 388.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 468.

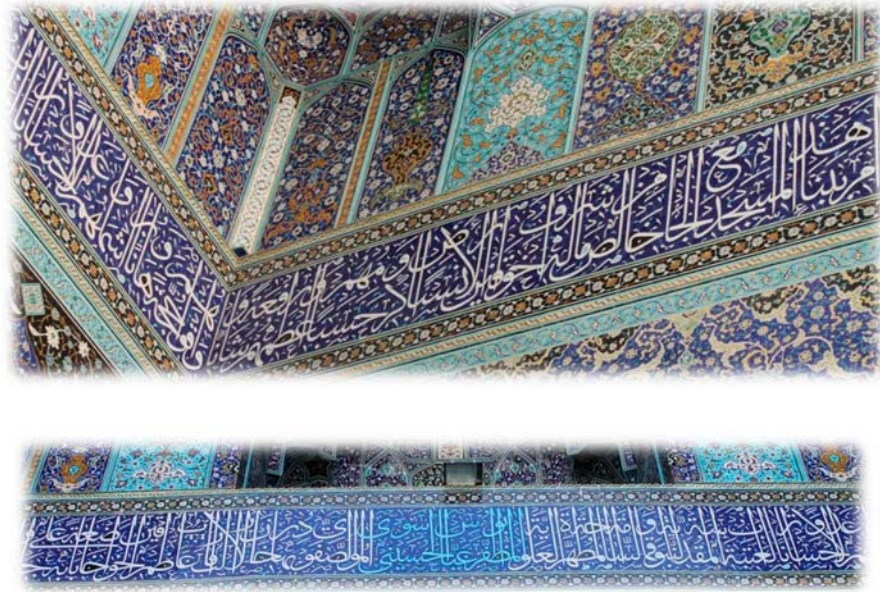
Figure 10. Shaykh Luṭfullāh mosque, Royal Square, Isfahan.



In the days of the rule of a king whose glory is similar to Jam, a king whose army consists of angels [and] whose palace is the heavens. [He is] the propagator of the faith of the Twelve Shi'i Imams, peace of God upon them from the most honorable, the just and the greatest king, the father of triumph, Shah 'Abbās al-Mūsavī al-Ṣafavī al-Ḥusaynī.

A distinct difference is evident between the inscriptions of Shah 'Abbās I's period and early inscriptions of Shah Ismā'īl and Shah Ṭahmāsb's time. As previously discussed, the titles of the coins in Shah 'Abbās' reign portrayed him as a mere servant of Imam 'Alī and far from a traditional image of a mighty king. However, the inscriptions on the mosques and palaces he built included the kingly titles and names of pre-Islamic Persian kings together to increase the king's dynastic authority. The inscriptions on gates and walls of the buildings in Maydān-e Naqsh-e Jahān indicate Shah 'Abbās I's desire to project the image of a king serving the religion (see Figure 11). His Shi'i genealogy and his public religious actions, which various cultural products of his time emphasize, validate this point. The inscription on Shaykh Luṭfullāh's Mosque, for example, introduces him as the reviver of his

Figure 11. The main entrance of the Royal Mosque, Royal Square, Isfahan.



ancestors' traditions. At the same time, it portrays the king as the disseminator of the religion of infallible Imams:

أمر بإنشاء هذا المسجد المبارك السلطان الأعظم و الخاقان الأكرم محيي مراسم آياته الطاهرين مروج مذهب  
 اللانمة المعصومين أبوالمظفر عباس الحسيني الموسوي الصفوي بهادر خان خلد الله تعالى ملكه و أجرى في  
 بحر التأييد فلكه بمحمد . و آله الطيبين الطاهرين المعصومين صلوات الله و سلامه عليه و عليهم<sup>29</sup>

Ordered to construct this blessed mosque was the great sovereign and the honorable king, the reviver of the traditions of his pious fathers. [He is] the disseminator of the innocent Imams. [He is] the father of the triumphant, 'Abbās al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṣafavī al-Mūsavī Bahādur Khān, may Allah, exalt him, and eternalize his reign and sail his ship in the oceans of support, by the virtue of Muḥammad and his noble, pure and infallible family, the peace of God on him and them.

As a further example, the inscription on the Royal Mosque about Shah 'Abbās I invokes notions of genealogy. In this inscription there is no mention of kingly titles, as establishing a mosque is known as an act of piety and not demonstration of a king's mighty character. The king, in terms of nobility, positionality, rationality,

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 402.

and the judiciary, was placed above all other kings. The inscription introduced him as the symbol of the Family of the Prophet:<sup>30</sup>

أمر ببناء هذا المسجد الجامع من خالص ماله أشرف خواقين الأرض نسباً و أكرمهم حسياً أعظمهم رفعة  
و شأناً و اقواهم حجة و برهاناً و أشملهم عدلاً و إحساناً تراب العتبة المقدسة النبوية و قمامة الساحة  
المطهرة العلوية أبوالمظفر عباس الحسيني الموسوي الصفوي<sup>31</sup>

Ordered to construct this congregational mosque from his personal wealth was the king with the noblest descent on the earth and the most honorable family. [He is] the greatest of all in position and the most respected one. [He is] the strongest of them in proof [of power] and his justice is the most inclusive and the most generous. [He is] the dust on the sacred threshold of the Prophet, and [he is] the rubbish of ‘Alid’s pure square. [He is] the father of triumph, ‘Abbās al- Ḥusaynī al- Mūsavī al-Ṣafavī.

In contrast to his coins, the inscriptions of Shah ‘Abbās II’s time intended to emphasize the king’s military prowess and authority in the eyes of the people. An expression such as “the leader of the Arab and Persian kings,” which was inscribed on Sufrehchī and Jārchī mosques, is an example of the king’s desire to be known in by his leadership ability, authority, and power. This expression appeared in two inscriptions of Shah ‘Abbās II’s period along with a range of titles that emphasized the king’s imperial power. “The greatest sovereign,” “the owner of people’s necks,” and “the hero of waters and lands” are among the titles that reminded audiences of the king’s earthly power and his authority over Muslims. This is the inscription of *madrāseh-ye Mīrzā Taqī*:

قد وفق ببناء هذا المدرسة في زمن دولة السلطان الأعظم و الخاقان الأكرم مولى ملوك العرب و العجم  
قهرمان الماء و الطين مروج مذهب الأئمة المعصومين عليهم السلام السلطان بن السلطان بن السلطان و  
الخابان بن الخاقان بن الخاقان شاه عباس الثاني الصفوي الموسوي بهادرخان.<sup>32</sup>

[He] was successful in building this school in the days of the rule of the greatest king, and the most honorable king, the supporter of all Arab and Persian kings, the hero of waters and lands, the propagator of the religion of infallible Imams, peace upon them, al-Sulṭān the son of al-Sulṭān the son of al-Sulṭān, the Khāqān the son of the Khāqān the son of the Khāqān, al-Sulṭān Shah ‘Abbās II al-Ṣafavī al-Mūsavī, Bahādur Khān.

This is the inscription of Jūrjūr Mosque in Isfahan, which also demonstrates the king’s power and authority:

<sup>30</sup>Masjid Ḥakīm and Qazvin’s ‘Āli Qāpū’s inscriptions used the same patterns (see Figure 9).

<sup>31</sup>Hunarfar, *Ganjineh-ye āsār*, 429.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 610.

في أيام خلافة السلطان الأكرم الأعظم الأعدل الأشجع قهرمان الماء و الطين مولا ملوك العرب و العجم  
أبوغازي أبو النصر أبو الفتح أبوالمظفر شاه عباس بهادرخان<sup>33</sup>

in the days of the guardian of al-Sulṭān the most honorable, the greatest, the best just king, the bravest, the hero of the oceans and lands, the leader of all Arab and non-Arab kings, the father of warriors, the father of triumph, the father of victory, the father of triumph, Shah ‘Abbās Bahādūr Khān.

While some of the remaining inscriptions from Shah ‘Abbās II’s period referred to him as “the propagator of the right religion of the Twelver Imams,” the term disappeared from the majority of the remaining inscriptions following his reign. The inscriptions of Shah Sulaymān’s buildings emphatically mix the religious role of the king with titles that portray his material power. In the inscriptions of Khalvat Nishīn mosque, the king is compared with Solomon and Alexander the Great. The expression *ẓill Allāh* (the shadow of God) is also used for legitimizing purposes. In depicting the king, one of the last inscriptions of Sulaymān’s period demonstrates this coexistence between religion and state. This inscription of *madrāseh-ye Kārgārān* is dated 1685, the last year of the king’s rule:

لقد وفق الله تعالى في ظل حماية أشرف السلاطين رافع الوية الشرع المبين مشيد أساس العلم و اليقين  
فرع الشجرة الطيبة الأحمدية غصن الدوحة العلية العلوية الخاقان بن الخاقان بن الخاقان سليمان  
الحسيني الموسوي الصفوي<sup>34</sup>

It was built by support of God and under the shadow of the noblest king’s support, the custodian of the flag of the brightest legacies, the establisher of the knowledge and faith’s foundation, he is the branch of the pure tree of the Prophet’s Family, the highest branch in a plane, the Khāqān the son of the Khāqān the son of the Khāqān, al-Sulṭān Sulaymān al-Ḥusaynī al-Mūsavī al-Ṣafavī.

The interest in applying the names of pre-Islamic Persian kings to Safavid kings can be traced in the inscriptions of Shah Ṣafī’s time. Darb-e Ṭuqchī Mosque includes the names of Persian kings who were famous for their power and glorious nature:

در زمان دولت خاقان جمشید رای سکندر صولت و سلطان فریدون فر دارا حشمت ابوالمظفر  
معزالدوله و عز نصره سلطان شاه صفی الحسيني الموسوي الصفوي بهادرخان<sup>35</sup>

During the reign of the king whose wisdom matches Jamshīd, whose authority matches Alexander, whose *farr* matches Firīdūn, and whose retinue matches Darius. He is the father of the triumphant and his polity is glorious, the Sulṭān, Shah Ṣafī al-Ḥusaynī, al-Mūsavī, al-Ṣafavī, Bahādūr Khān.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 621.

<sup>34</sup>Hunarfar, *Ganjīneh-ye āsār*, 652.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 542.



The inscription of 'Ālī Qāpū's gate, which was engraved after the palace's construction, is a culmination of all previously mentioned discourses demonstrating the king as the leader of religion by serving its legacies, owning spiritual power, and being the king of kings.

(یا یا الله) ... شهنشاہ دین (یا محمد) داور دین پرور ایران زمین (یا علی مدد) کلب درگاہ علی فخرشہان (یا یا الله) حامی دین نبی ... (یا محمد) آنکہ از آب رحمت و خاک بہشت (یا علی مدد) دست قدرت طینت گردون سرشت (یا یا الله) پایہ ایوان قدرش بی حجاب (یا محمد) باشد آنجایی کہ سر زد آفتاب (یا علی مدد) منتظم باشد از آن گردون مآب (یا یا الله) ... شاہ دین شاہ زمان سلطان حسین (یا یا الله) بن سلیمان ابن سلیمان بارگاہ<sup>36</sup>

(O Allah) ... The king of the religion (O Muḥammad) the judge and the religion nurturer of the land of Iran (O 'Alī help) the dog of the threshold of 'Alī who is the honor of all kings (O 'Alī help), the supporter of the Prophet's religion ... (O Muḥammad) who from the water of mercy and the clay of heaven (O 'Alī help), he is as powerful as the fate (O Allah), the powerful column of his court is with no veil (O Muḥammad) the place where the sun rises (O 'Alī help) is under the king whose attitude matches the fate, (O Allah) ... the shah of the religion, the shah of the age, Sulṭān Ḥusayn (O Allah), Ibn Sulaymān, whose palace is similar to Solomon.

As is evident from these materials, after the reign of the powerful Shah 'Abbās I, there was a desire to declare the kings' imperial authority and power. The purpose of doing so was to demonstrate the continuity of Safavid power. The inscriptions cited in this section seem to de-emphasize Shi'ism and the religious role of the king, as compared to the coinage discussed in the first section. Considering the internal conflicts and the chaos after the death of Shah 'Abbās I, this emphasis on the imperial power of the king for the general population seems to have been necessary for consolidating power within the Persian empire's borders.

#### *Evidence from Royal Investiture Ceremonies*

Royal investiture orations and ceremonies are among the sources through which Safavid legitimacy could be discussed. The interest in making ties between the Safavid kings and pre-Islamic Persian kings is particularly evident in the *khutbah* (enthronement oration) that Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (b. 1627; d. 1699), the renowned and very powerful Iranian Shi'i scholar, delivered for Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn. *Khutbah* (enthronement oration) is an address delivered by a *khatib* (orator) as part of a religious service. The oration was a means of legitimizing the kingship.<sup>37</sup> Speech elements in orations for Safavid kings speak of the loyalty between the

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 423.

<sup>37</sup>The oration fulfills a religious mandate associated with specific occasions such as the weekly congregational Friday service, the two 'Id holidays, and the day of 'Arafāt during the *hajj*. Orations could also be delivered by popular preachers. On other occasions, such as a marriage contract ceremony or during an

religious scholars and the kings in managing the affairs of religion and the state.<sup>38</sup> As religion was meant to guide life in general, religious charisma could bestow legitimacy on non-religious activities, including kingship. Unfortunately, few documents about orations given for earlier Safavid kings are available.

The available documents provide a unique perspective on the nature of Safavid kingship and authority. Quinn's study of historiography of Safavid coronations in a number of narrative sources reveals interesting points about notions of kingship in Safavid Iran throughout the dynasty's history. Ghiās al-dīn Khvāndamīr in *Ḥabīb al-siyar* "combines symbols of pre-Islamic Persian kingship with both Islamic and specifically Shi'i symbols of authority" when describing the coronation of Shah Ismā'īl I. Based on this narration, "pre-Islamic, ancient Persian notions of a just king, the shadow of God on earth" worked together with Imami Shi'i ideas to legitimize the first Safavid king.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast, considering Shah Ismā'īl II's attempt to return the country's religious orientation to Sunni Islam, the narratives of his coronation comprise a different sort of information and provide fewer details of the event itself. Muḥaqqiq Karakī (d. 1533), famous as Muḥaqqiq al-Sānī and a supporter of Shah Ismā'īl and Shah Ṭahmāsb in making Shi'ism the state religion, had a son called Shaykh 'Abdul 'Alī. This son spread the "rug of sovereignty"<sup>40</sup> for the ascension of Shah Ismā'īl II and

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eclipse, orations usually were given in mosques. However, given the expansion of the Islamic domain and the appearance of imperial caliphal administration, the mosque became less of an instrument for managing the polity. Instead, it became used for solely religious practices. However, the oration, which dealt with political, military, and other state affairs, in earlier days was pronounced by the sovereign himself or his governors and generals but now could be delivered by the religious scholar, Mubarak. "Khuṭbah," Oxford Islamic Studies Online, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0461>

<sup>38</sup>The relationship between religious scholars and the Safavid monarchs is a long and well-documented one for both sides. The Safavid monarchs realized that 'Amilis (a Shi'i family for whom Shah Ismā'īl provided an opportunity to spread Shi'ism and educate the people on Shi'i instructions in Iran) scholarship was highly regarded among the Shi'ite intellectuals. Patronizing the 'Amilis provided legitimacy and imperial sovereignty. On the other hand, the Safavids could provide the 'Amilis with the power and prestige they needed. The 'Amilis gained significant power during the Safavid rule and achieved important positions in religious and civic institutions such as *shaykh al-Islam*, the highest religious position, and *pīsh namāz*, the prayer leaders for the royal court and the great city mosques. The new empire needed clerics like 'Amilis who could bestow upon them the legitimacy they needed to distinguish themselves from the caliphate kingship. Performing Friday prayers was the best example of a practice that could deepen the theological differences between the community of Shi'is and Sunnis. The 'Amilis opened new vistas in the interpretive capacity of religious law, which was important for the empire as they offered theologically acceptable rationalizations for the ideological shift the Safavids sought to create. In *Converting Persia*, Abisaab explains how and why the Arab 'ulamā were brought from Ottoman Syria to Iran. She explains how these émigré scholars changed the face of religion in Iran and furnished a source of legitimacy for the Safavid monarchs.

<sup>39</sup>Quinn, "Coronation Narratives in Safavid Chronicles," 329.

<sup>40</sup>Although this term is used to refer to the actual ceremony of royal investiture, there was a rug given to the new king in the ceremony that was famous as the "rug of sovereignty." *Sajjādeh-ye irshād* with the early Safavids became one of the regalia used in coronations. In Shah Ismā'īl II's coronation, this rug was referred to as the *qālicheh-ye saltanat* (rug of sovereignty). As Arjomand mentioned, this idea was com-

Muḥammad Khudābandeh (d. 1595).<sup>41</sup> In the seventeenth century, when Isfahan became the permanent capital of the Safavid rulers and Shi'ism was the state religion, the inauguration of a new monarch was entrusted to the hands of the *Shaykh al-Islām* of the capital. Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631) conducted the coronation for Shah Ṣafī. The event appeared in *Tārīkh-e ālam ārā-ye 'abbāsī* by Iskandar Beyg Munshī, and the continuation of this work, *Zayl-e ālam ārā-ye 'abbāsī*. Quinn identified three significant changes between the two documented narrations of this event. In *Zayl-e ālam ārā-ye 'abbāsī*, Munshī “add[ed] the presence of *sayyids* and *'ulamā* to the ceremony, replace[d] a reference to prayer carpet as the family heirloom used in the coronation with a throne, and replace[d] the ceremony of kissing the king's feet with a general ‘giving congratulations’.”<sup>42</sup>

A second coronation for Shah Ṣafī, which took place one day after the first, was recorded in *Khulāṣat al-siyar* by Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm b. Khvājagī Iṣfahānī.<sup>43</sup> He wrote that the day “contained the blessing time”; therefore, it was a perfect day for the king, who “deserved the throne and crown,” to be announced as the king. Khvājagī Iṣfahānī made use of the descriptors “completeness” and “comprehensiveness” for Mīr Dāmād in order to show that when such a religious scholar legitimizes a king, the king is definitively God's representative on earth.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, Iṣfahānī did not mention the use of coronation regalia. Instead, he stated that they used Shah Ismā'īl's belt and sword in the coronation ceremony, a practice that goes back at least to Seljuq period.<sup>45</sup> Comparing these narratives, Quinn concluded that by Ṣafī's time, the power of *qizilbāsh* had declined, while the presence of *'ulamā* demonstrated that the religious establishment had become very powerful.<sup>46</sup>

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pletely forgotten by the time of Sulaymān. During the reign of Ṣafī II, it was described as the *qālicheb-ye irshād* in one source and as the *qālicheb-ye 'adālat* (rug of justice) in another source. According to Arjomand, “This ceremonial juxtaposition of the norms of *irshād* and justice, deriving respectively from the Sufi and the patrimonial ethos, illustrates the transition from the former to the latter norm, which aimed at legitimating Safavid rule in the eyes of the sedentary majority, and which was in fact completed by that time.” See Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 180.

<sup>41</sup> Āfūshteh narrated a story in which Shah Ismā'īl asked him to attend the inauguration and open up the rug for him, symbolically confirming his kingship and reminding him that his father was a true supporter of the king. Āfūshteh wrote that Sheikh 'Abdul 'Ali rejected this request, stating that his father was not a *farrāsh* to anyone, so the king should not expect Āfūshteh to be one. See Kazim Musavi Bujnurdī et al, *Tārīkh-i Jām*, 11:93. In addition, Arjomand, in a discussion of Safavid sovereignty and its similarity with the royal Persian Sasanid kings, provided an account on the coronation of the Sulṭān Sulaymān and the following kings. See Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 180. Rasul Jafarian, in his khabaronline weblog (<http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/567603/weblog/jafarian>), presented the coronations and the narratives of these incidents from different historical sources.

<sup>42</sup> For further reading about this event, see Khwājagī Iṣfahānī, *Khulāṣat al-siyar*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Quinn, “Coronation Narratives in Safavid Chronicles,” 327.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Majlisī, *Khutbah-ye julūs*. The full oration was also documented by Mīrzā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī Ṭūsī, the author of *Dastūr-e Shabriyārān* and the religious scholar of the Safavid period. See Naṣīrī and Muqaddam, *Dastūr-e Shabriyārān*, 22–4.

<sup>46</sup> Quinn, “Coronation Narratives in Safavid Chronicles,” 328.

The oration of the last Safavid king, Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn, clearly establishes a tie between the concept of kingship and imamship. Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn asked Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī to give the oration for his appointment, which took place in the ‘Abbāsī Congregational Mosque. The oration started with notes about the creation of Adam and the necessity of having a spiritual leader since then. Majlisī, by starting the oration with a discussion of the prophets’ responsibility in guiding the people, opened up the path toward comparing the prophets and imams with the Safavid king. He argued that the prophets, who organized matters of *dīn* (religion) and *dunyā* (world), came to this world to guide the people who were lost in the deserts of confusion and deviation. Then, he connected the necessity of guidance with the concept of kingship and introduced Safavid kingship, the righteous form of kingship in the absence of Imam Mahdī. The Safavid kingship was therefore to take the responsibility of people’s guidance. In this oration, two elements were present and intermingled. First, the notions of Persianate kingship were seen in titles that also were used to refer to Shah Ismā‘īl. Second, Shi‘ī ideas of kingship were seen in references to Shi‘ī doctrine as well as the expressions of servitude towards the Shi‘ī Imams that were similar to the dominant expressions during Shah ‘Abbās I’s reign. These two elements were combined in order to declare power for this king.

بعد از غروب خورشید سپهر نبوت در افق عالم بقا و احتجاب اقمار فلک امامت در نقاب غیبت و سحاب اختفا قادر بیمنت و خالق بیضنت از مزید لطف و مرحمت بر بقایای این امت مقالید فرمانروایی و مفاتیح کشورگشایی را در کف کفایت و قبضه‌ی درایت سلاطین عدالت شعار و خواقین فلک اقتدار سپرده که عامه رعایا و کافه برایا در ظل ظلیل ایشان در مهاد امنیت و استراحت بیاسایند و از جور و عدوان ارباب ظلم و طغیان نجات یابند.<sup>47</sup>

After that, the sun of the sky of Prophecy disappeared in the world of eternity; and after hiding the moons of Imamate under the mask of Absence and the clouds of secrecy; the unfailing competitor, and the generous Creator, because of its kindness and generosity toward this nation, entrusted the keys of rule and conquest in competent hands and the knowing grasp of kings with tact; the kings whose nameplate is justice and the kings whose power is similar to eternity. His purpose provided for the entire subjects and all people a shadow under which they rest in peace and security; and to save them from the oppression and enmity of the lords of injustice and revolt.

The *khutbah* continued to describe the kings in terms of their justice, power, and mercy. Their appointment to rule was the choice of God, who seeks blessings for his people. God is merciful, and this is evident from God’s choice of a king who is kind, just, and caring:

<sup>47</sup>Majlisī, *Khutbah-ye julūs*.

اراده کریم لایزال... تشریف سلطنت و جهانبانی بر قامت استقامت شهریاری پوشد که نصب العین خاطر خورشید ناظرش بسط بساط رأفت و عدالت و خفض جناح مرحمت و مکرمت بر کافه امت بوده باشد<sup>48</sup>

The undying will of God... put the dress of *sulṭān* and world-guarding on the enduring body of a king who, the target of his eyes and his sun-like wisdom is perpetuating kindness, justice and covering all people under the wings of mercy and compassion.

Majlisī continued his speech by indicating that the people would live in comfort and ease for many years under the just kingship of the Safavids. He claimed that the people enjoyed unlimited favors from the Safavid kingship and that, under their rule, people were saved from the darkness of infidelity and wandering. Majlisī saw it as the people's duty to respect the Safavid kings and appreciate their efforts. He described Safavid kings as suns of the elevated skies and moons of guidance.

بر ذمت همت کافه شیعیان و عامه مؤمنان که ضمیر حقایق تصویر ایشان به نور ایمان منور گردیده شکر نعمت هر یک از افراد انجاد این سلسله عالییه که شمس فلک رفعت و جلالت و اقمار بروج هدایت و ولایت اند محتتم و لازم است<sup>49</sup>

It is the responsibility of all Shi'ites and the believers whose soul is lightened by the brightness of faith to appreciate the blessing of prosperity from the bravest people of this family, who are the suns of high and glorious skies and the moons of guidance and leadership.

Unlike the patterns on coins, which avoided using the royal titles to refer to the kings from Shah 'Abbās' time, Majlisī did not hesitate to draw a parallel between the Safavid kings and the pre-Islamic kings of Persia. Majlisī applied the names of historical Persian kings to the current Safavid king to invoke the former's sacredness for the latter. He also highlighted the link between the Safavid kings and the family of Muḥammad and 'Alī to argue for Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn's legitimacy:

مالک ملک و واهب سلطنت... خلعت شهریاری بر قامت با رفعت نونهالی پوشانیده... اعی شهریار عادل باذل گردون بارگاه ملایک سپاه جمشید حشمت فریدون شوکت سکندر شان دارا دربان گل گلدسته گلستان مصطفوی نوباره بوستان مرتضوی شجره نبوت و رسالت غصن دوحه امامت و ولایت... رافع لوای دین و دولت اساس ملک و ملت قطب فلک اقتدار مرکز آسمان عدالت و وقار مجری مراسم ملت و دین و مروج ذاهب ائمه طاهرین...<sup>50</sup>

The owner of kingship and the giver of the *sulṭānate*... dressed up the robe of kingship to a seedling tree with sublimity... I mean the just, generous king whose court

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Majlisī, *Khubūbeh-ye julūs*.

is the heaven, his army is from the angels, his retinue is similar to Jamshīd's, his glory is similar to Firīdūn's, and his dignity is comparable to Alexander's. Darius is his doorkeeper. He is the best flower of the *muṣṭafavī* garden, and the new fruit of *mur-taḏavī* garden. He is the tree of prophecy and the new branch of the tree of the imamate and sovereignty ... The upholder of the flag of religion and governance, the basis of kingship and nation, the pole of sky of power, the center of the sky of justice and dignity, the executive of religion traditions and propagator of religious imams.

In the following section of this oration, the names of historical Persian kings were used along with Shi'i expressions for legitimizing purposes. This combination demonstrates the significance these two pillars of legitimacy for the last Safavid king:

سلطان دین پرور و خاقان معدلت گستر جم نشان فریدون فر سلیمان مکان خورشید افسر نبوی حسب مرتضوی نسب جعفری مذهب موسوی ادب زبینه تاج و تخت کیانی وارث مرتبه سلیمانی ... خسرو جم قدر فلک اقتدار داور دین پرور والاتباب برگزیده کردگار آسمان و زمین قهرمان مطلق العنان ما و طین غلام باخلاص امیرالمومنین ملاذ اعظم السلاطین معاذ اکارم الخواقین حامی حوزة الدین حارس شریعت سید المرسلین مروج طریقة الائمه الطاهرین<sup>51</sup>

The sultan who nurtures religion, the khāqān who distributes justice, and whose seal is similar to Jam and his glory to Firīdūn. His place is similar to Solomon whose crown is the sun. His dignity is prophetic, and he descends from Murtaḏā [‘Alī]. His religion is of the Imam Ja‘far and his manner is of Moses. He deserved the throne and crown of Kianids. He inherited the high-valued position of Solomon ... The king whose glory is similar to [the glory of] Jam, his power is heavenly, he is the judge who nurtures the religion, appointed by the creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the true hero and the controller of the water and earth, the true servant of *Amīr al-Mu‘minīn* [‘Alī], the shelter of the greatest sultans, the shelter of the best khāqāns, the supporter of the religion's realm, the guardian of the Prophet's laws and the traditions of the purest imams.

This oration presents Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn through a culmination of all the previous sources of legitimacy outlined above. Majlisī legitimized the role of kingship in the absence of a just imam by discussing the king's special characteristics, such as his sense of justice, military prowess, and God-given wisdom. He also emphasized the kings' similarity to ancient Persian kings. With regard to his sense of justice, he was compared to Jam, and in possessing *farr*, was compared to Firīdūn. He also mentioned the Shi'i family lineage of the king. Therefore, having both the Persian kings and Shi'i imams in his background, Majlisī argued that Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn is the king who can manage the issues of state and religion; therefore, the people must follow this king and submit to his authority.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

*Panegyric Evidence*

Panegyrics were the production of court systems and they were predominantly produced when a king was in power. By considering the nature of panegyric, as written for receiving rewards, the poets' portrayal of kings is traditionally "assumed" to be the closest to the kings' self-image. Although it is generally understood that panegyric was "a formal, public poem which was presented to the ruler and performed in the presence of the court on ceremonial occasions,"<sup>52</sup> there are distinct differences between a panegyric that is written solely for seeking the patronage of kings and one that was produced for recitation to a broader public audience. For example, the poems of triumph that Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī (d. 1676) wrote for Shah 'Abbās II differ significantly compared to panegyrics that Salīm Tehrānī (d. 1647)<sup>53</sup> or Faṣīḥī Hiravī (d. 1639)<sup>54</sup> wrote for Safavid kings, both in references to Safavid ideology and language use. While the triumph poems of Ṣā'ib are occupied with religious references, the panegyrics of Salīm Tehrānī or Faṣīḥī are written with no religious references. Furthermore, there are sometimes differences between legitimizing patterns in cultural materials Shah 'Abbās I had a role in creating and panegyrics that poets dedicated to him. Most Safavid cultural materials present Shah 'Abbās as a king who served the Shi'i imams and the people. However, some of the panegyrics that are dedicated to him refrained from such a depiction. The images of kingship in these poems suggest that they were designed for submission to the court or for recitation at smaller gatherings. In other words, they were not rehearsed for a broader audience as they lack Shi'i references.

For example, Salīm Tehrānī wrote a *qaṣīdeh* for Shah 'Abbās in which none of the dominant elements of Safavid ideology is available. Salīm Tehrānī portrayed Shah 'Abbās as an approachable, sympathetic, and generous king. This image is in line with the general ideology of Shah 'Abbās. Shah 'Abbās attempted to distance himself from the imperial kings of Sunni culture. His emphasis on practicing public piety and expressing servitude towards imams with titles such as "the vanguard dog of Imam 'Alī" speak of such intentions. Nevertheless, Salīm's panegyric did not comment on the relation between the king and Shi'i doctrines. Salīm's *qaṣīdeh* starts with an introduction about morality and ethics and further continues with

<sup>52</sup>Meisami, "Genres of Court Literature," 237.

<sup>53</sup>Salīm Tehrānī (d. 1647) was born in Tarasht and raised in Lahijan. He did not have a systematic education. During his stay in Lahijan he wrote panegyrics to dedicate to the rulers of Lahijan. When he left Lahijan for Isfahan, he dedicated poems to both Shah 'Abbās I and Ṣāfi I but did not receive the attention he desired from either king. The biographers of his time believed he left Isfahan for Shiraz before his final departure to India, where he entered the circles of power in Agra and Lahore. He passed away in Kashmir and was buried there (Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 125-6.) His *divān* is a combination of all forms of poetry. His language is simple, with no intricate metaphors or other literary devices. As Safa mentions, Salīm's language was closer to the "language of ordinary people" because of his lack of education. Despite this fact, Salīm included images which are sources for inspiration for the very famous poets of his time such as Kalīm (b. 1581; d. 1651) and Ghānī Kashmīrī (d. 1668). See Safa, *Tārikh-e adabīyāt*, v5/2, 1162; and Naṣrābādī, *Tazkireh*, 227.

<sup>54</sup>To read about Faṣīḥī, his life, and his style of writing, see Dehghani, "Shā'ir-e shu'leh-hā."

poets' miseries in life, as well as his perfect poetic skills. Later, the poet highlights the king's Sufi character by emphasizing the king's spiritual and sacred power on the life of his people:

آن نهنگ بحر کین خواهی که مرغ روح خصم  
می کند در آب تیغش همچو مرغابی شناه  
جوهر شمشیر شاهی، آبروی تاج و تخت  
شعله شمع عدالت، شاه دین، عباس شاه  
ای غبار درگهت از تاج شاهان باج خواه  
یک حباب بحر قدرت نه فلک را بارگاه  
گر سلیمان نیستی اما بود از حشمتت  
جانورداران تو هر یک سلیمان دستگاه  
از ترحم کبک کھساری ز بیم عدل تو  
می دهد شهباز را در زیر بال خود پناه  
کعبه کوی تو دارد جذبه ای کز شوق آن  
همچو اشک از بطن مادر، طفل می افتد به راه  
چون کند لطف تو از زندان اسیران را خلاص  
می کند فواره نی را از برای آب چاه  
خوانده نقاش ازل رخس ترا خیر العمل  
گفته جلال اجل تیغ تو را روحی فداه<sup>55</sup>

That whale of the sea of revenge, makes the dove-like soul of his adversary  
swim into the luster of his sword like a duck

He is the essence of the kingly sword, he is the honor of crown and throne  
He is the flame of the candle of justice, he is the king of the religion, 'Abbās Shah

Oh! You who the mere dust of your court demands tribute from the crown of other  
kings,

The court of nine skies is a drop in the sea of your magnificence

You are not Solomon—rather, out of your majesty,  
All you create is of Solomon's rank

A mountain partridge, being scared of your justice,  
shelters a falcon under its wings

Your abode is the Ka'beh and its attraction is so strong [that],  
As quickly as the first cries of the baby detached from its mother's womb, the king  
begins its journey [towards Ka'beh]

<sup>55</sup>Salīm, *Divān*, 359.



Your kindness frees the prisoners from jail,  
Like a fountain that draws water from a well through a pipe

The painter of eternity called your battle horse “the best of acts” (i.e. *jihād*);  
The executioner of fate said to your sword “my soul is for it!”

The metaphors used in the poem include a dove, a candle and a flame, and a bubble in the sea. These metaphors portray the king, but not necessarily one of power. In the first line, when the poet speaks of the king’s revenge, he compares the enemy’s soul to a dove, a metaphor that, by considering the context in which this metaphor had previously been used to refer to a spiritual Sufi and human beings, reflects the lack of animosity between the king and his enemy. In the second line, where the dominant theme is the king’s authority over religion and the state, Salim applies the image of a candle and flame to refer to the king’s justice. This image more commonly appears in romantic narratives than kingly ones, and consequently it contrasts with the ideas and concepts that are represented in the next line. The concept of travel is expressed through the poet’s passion for the king’s residence. This image positioned the king as similar to a spiritual leader and a beloved. These ranging images are not combined with images that represent the king’s power and dominance.

Shānī Takallū (d. 1614), the most famous poet at the court of Shah ‘Abbās, also did not praise his patron with notions that were dominant in the cultural materials of his time. Shānī did not become a popular poet until after he wrote a *qaṣīdeh* in praise of Imam ‘Alī, which greatly pleased the shah. He received his weight in gold as a reward for the poem.<sup>56</sup> Most of Shānī’s works are in praise of Shi‘i imams, especially Imam Ḥusayn, Rizā and Mahdī. He also wrote panegyrics in praise to some of the courtiers of the time. Nevertheless, in praising Shah ‘Abbās I, there are no direct references to Shi‘ism. Instead, Shānī attempted to portray the king as a sacred person with Sufi traits. Although, the king’s military prowess was still central to his poetry, the images do not show similarity with the kings or the heroes of pre-Islamic times. Shānī pointed to the king’s good fortune by referring to the his falcon-like power in order to demonstrate him as a sacred king.

شاهین اقتدار تو عنقای چرخ را  
روز شکار صید کیوتر گرفته است<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup>This event has been narrated by Iskandar Beyg Munshī in *Tārīkh-e ‘ālam ārā-ye ‘abbāsī*. It has been said that Shānī, in a *maṣnavī* which was written for the shah, praised him with the following line: “If the enemy serves the wine or the friend / Both do it for the beauty of the beloved.” The king enjoyed his skill and nobility and gave him his weight in gold. See Munshī, *Tārīkh-e ‘ālam ārā-ye ‘abbāsī*, 516. Zabih Allah Safa mentioned that this event occurred in 1596 (during the ninth year of ‘Abbās’ reign) and not in 1592. In 1592 Shānī presented a *qaṣīdeh* in praise of Imam ‘Alī when the Uzbeks and Russians were meeting with the king. Safa, *Tārīkh-e adabīyāt dar Iran*, 945. Naṣr-ābādī also confirmed this anecdote.

<sup>57</sup>Shānī, *Divān*, 55.

Your falcon of power  
on the day of hunting saw the phoenix of the faith as if it were just a dove

Shānī rarely used the terms “king” or “kingship” to refer to Shah ‘Abbās. The shah has not been known to be responsible for the dissemination of religion, but his sword and power were compared to Imam ‘Alī’s:

ترکیب ذوالفقار تو را مرد کارزار  
در پیش چشم مرگ مصور گرفته است<sup>58</sup>

your *Zulfiqār*,<sup>59</sup> appears as death  
to the eyes of a warrior.

Claiming lineage from Sufi *shaykhs* was a practice stemming from *Ṣafvat al-ṣafā* and imitated by later Safavid histories such as *Futūḥāt shabī* and *Ḥabīb al-siyar*. These two sources introduced Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim as the ancestor of the early Safavid leaders. In *Tārīkh-e ‘abbāsī*, Ibrāhīm Yazdī traced Shah ‘Abbās’ family lineage on both sides back to Imam ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib through Imam Ḥusayn and Zayn al-‘Abidīn.<sup>60</sup> Yet the lineage was not an important issue for Shānī and his depiction of the king. In Shānī’s poem about Shah ‘Abbās I, the shah was not depicted in service of Shi’ism; however, his sacred personality was emphasized through images that claim his similarity to the Sufi *shaykhs*. For example, in a *tarkīb-band* that supposedly was written after moving the capital of the empire to Isfahan, the king was compared to Khizr and a *murshid-e kāmil*, who could save the poet by inviting him to Isfahan. Isfahan is portrayed as the life-giving lake:

دارم طمع که سوی صفاهان بری مرا  
از کشور بدن به سوی جان بری مرا  
خضر رهم شوی بشکوه سکندری  
یعنی به سوی چشمه حیوان بری مرا<sup>61</sup>

I am longing for you to take me to Isfahan  
To take me from the land of the body to the spirit

You will become the Khizr of my path with your Alexandrian glory  
This means that you will take me to the fountain of life.

Ṣā’ib’s panegyrics for Shah ‘Abbās II and Ṣafi suggest that his poems were recited for the broader public. In these poems, Ṣā’ib moves between the various cultures involved with Safavid ideology while he emphasizes Shi’i aspects of kingship. To legitimize him, the poet portrays the king as a religious leader. The image of his patron-monarch is

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Name of Imam ‘Alī’s sword.

<sup>60</sup>Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 85.

<sup>61</sup>Shānī, *Divān*, 102.

constructed through a combination of concepts such as “light,” “elevation,” “fortune,” and “power,” which imply the king’s divinity and sacredness. Šā’ib portrays his monarch-patrons with images that relate them to the pre-Islamic kings of Persian empire. He compares them to retainers of Twelver Shi’ism, pious leaders possessing abilities similar to those of the Sufis. Their responsibilities included fighting against the “infidels in the name of *jihād-e akbar*” (the greater war).<sup>62</sup>

Šā’ib frequently compares his patrons (Šafi I and ‘Abbās II) to the sun and light. The comparison of royalty to the sun and to the broader symbolism of light as a metaphor for splendor is ubiquitous in Iranian, Mesopotamian, Hellenistic, and later Roman kingship.<sup>63</sup> In ancient Iranian kingship, the king’s charisma was sometimes physically apparent as light to his subjects and it was sometimes associated with the attributes of a crown. While the king’s administration of justice or knowledge is like the sun illuminating the world, he is also the shadow of God, which provides shade where peace and security flourish.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the concept of light connects the Safavid kings to the House of the Prophet.<sup>65</sup>

To illustrate, Šā’ib combines the concept of light with *vilāyat* (sovereignty), a religious term which is associated with the legitimacy of Muslim leadership. It juxtaposes

<sup>62</sup>*Jihād-e Akbar* (the greater war) is the one integral struggle. This term is in opposition to *Jihād-e aṣḡhar* (the smaller war), which refers to engaging in war on the battlefield with enemies. Šā’ib used this term to describe the war between Shah ‘Abbās II and the Indians. For further reading on this concept, see Ṭabataba’i, *Tarjumeḥ-ye tafsīr-e al-mizān*, 582; Kāshānī, *Rasā’il-e Fayḏ-e Kāshānī*, 16.

<sup>63</sup>Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 17.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>Light of Muḥammad is a symbolic light to the world. In the early hadith material, the Muḥammadan light is referred to as *nūr-e Muḥammad*. The light is said to have reached Muḥammad from his progenitors through the process of procreation. (Rubin, “Nūr Muḥammadi”). In hadith and narrations, the light of Muḥammad is a light through which the divine light shines upon the world and humanity finds its path towards truth. In Sufism the light of Muḥammad existed from before the creation of Adam (see Schimmel, *And Muhammad*, 151). It is also believed the other prophets were created from Muḥammad’s light. Muḥammad Ghazālī defines the perfect guide between God and a human being as an individual in whom the light of God has appeared. In Shi’i traditions, not only Muḥammad, but also ‘Alī and his family, including the Imāms, share the same light from God. The light passing through was split in two parts, so that both Muḥammad and ‘Alī received equal shares of it (Rubin, “Nūr Muḥammadi”). Schimmel presented the literature on development of these theories in *And Muhammad*, in which she examines the place of Muḥammad in Muslim piety through the works of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and Urdu literature. Each chapter of Schimmel’s work studies different elements of the Prophet’s life and character through Muslim views, all of which draw their examples and discussions from works of literature. Chapter 7 of this work in particular pays attention to the idea of Muḥammad’s light in mystical poems. In general, the goal of a Muslim’s life is to ascend to union with the state of *ḥaqīqat-e Muḥammadiyyeh* (“archetypal Muḥammad”) as the first principle of creation. Rulers were considered the perfect guide and created from the light of God. As a result, light became a poetic motif for poets to argue for the rulers’ authenticity, knowledge, noble lineage, and perfection. Theories concerning Muḥammad’s luminous character have been constructed in the works of philosophers, Sufis, and theologians such as Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (b. 767 CE), Sahl al-Tustarī (b. 818 CE), and Ḥallāj (b. 858 CE). For an interpretation of the light of Muḥammad see al-Balkhī, *Tafsīr muqātil*; al-Ghazzālī, *The Niche of Lights*; Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*.

the king with imams who were believed to have the exclusive right to Muslim leadership after the Prophet Muḥammad:

از جبهه تو نور ولایت بود عیان  
زان سان که آفتاب نماید در آینه<sup>66</sup>

Your forehead glows with the radiance of sovereignty  
Like the sun reflecting in a mirror.

Or in a similar context:

چو آفتاب نمایان بود زسینه ی صبح  
بر طرف جبهه او نور اختر اقبال<sup>67</sup>

Just as the sun is visible amidst the morning horizon  
The glow of the star of good fortune radiates from his forehead.

Ṣā'ib succinctly invokes the different discourses of Safavid legitimacy and further ties them together with the concept of light. In doing so, he attributes to the king a sacred and sovereign image, calling for the Safavid king to be accepted as the righteous ruler.

Another place where the concept of light frequently appears is in introductory lines or the main body of the *qaṣīdehs*. There, it builds the foundation of the poetic presentation of a legitimate ruler. Ṣā'ib's *tashbīb*s (introductory lines in *qaṣīdeh*) represent the world in growth and prosperity, usually depicting nature as calm and full of happiness. Ṣā'ib's *tashbīb*s usually present spring or the end of winter, when the world finds a fresh soul after its seasonal death. Nature is described in terms of its beauty, its light, and its fragrance. This combination of beauty and illumination was a response to the new king coming to the throne. Additionally, light as seen in celestial references plays an important role in the overall structure of Ṣā'ib's poetry. The illuminated world under the Safavid ruler is usually presented through portraying a cluster of shining objects (mostly the stars) and ideas such as *ṣāhib-qirān*, *sa'd* (with good omen), *sa'adat* (fortune), light, and the sun. This interest in utilizing the themes of nature and light for praise is demonstrated especially in one of Ṣā'ib's *qaṣīdeh* in which *āftāb* (the sun) is its *radīf*.<sup>68</sup> The king is known as "the sun," who gives his army enough security to conquer the world with him. In the section praising the king, the poet uses the sun to describe the king's attributes, especially the features that portray him as a spiritual and religious leader. Both the sun and the king are bright, and both are generous. The sun's brightness makes all stars look smaller and dimmer. This is intended to show the king's superiority over other rulers. The ever-

<sup>66</sup>Ṣā'ib, *Divān*, 3556.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 3562.

<sup>68</sup>*Radīf* is a repeated rhyming phrase that may appear at the end of each line. *Radīf* is specific to Persian poems. To read about its function and its influence on the general structure of poetry, see Shafī'i Kadkani, *Mūsīqī-ye shī'r*, 123-61.

lasting nature of the sun has also been used to refer to the king's constant effort in praying. The sun is bright and shining because it never sleeps, and it is thus similar to the king, who does not sleep because he prays continuously.

In the antistrophe,<sup>69</sup> the poet takes another stance in comparing the sun with the king. The king and the sun no longer resemble each other, because the king is "the shadow of God" and it is impossible for the shadow and the sun to be equal:

نسبت خورشید با آن روی نورانی خطاست  
 چون به ظل حق تواند شد برابر آفتاب؟  
 تیغ او را گر به خاطر بگذرانند، می شود  
 چون مه از انگشت پیغمبر دو پیکر آفتاب  
 شبنمی بی رخصت از گلزار نتواند ربود  
 در زمان دولت آن دادگستر آفتاب  
 کرد در زر خاک را دست زرافشانس نهان  
 ساخت پنهان در ضمیر خاک اگر زر آفتاب  
 شد تمام از فیض عالمگیر او هر ناقصی  
 ماه نو را کرد گر بدر منور آفتاب<sup>70</sup>

It is mistaken to draw comparison between the sun and that radiant countenance  
 How can the sun stand equal to the shadow of God?

By merely thinking of his blade,  
 The sun will split in two, as did the moon by the fingertip of the Prophet

The sun shall not be able to steal a drop of dew from the flowers without permission  
 In the time of his justice-spreading rule.

His gold-spreading hands buried the earth in gold,  
 While the sun merely concealed gold under the ground

All incomplete beings became complete under his universal blessing  
 While the sun merely caused the new moon to grow into a full moon.

Ṣā'ib ends this *qaṣīdeh* by referring to the authority of the king in the absence of *Imam Zamān* (the twelfth imam), who is also represented in the metaphor of the sun:

تا به آب قدرت این نه آسیا گردان بود  
 تا به امر حق شود طالع ز خاور آفتاب

<sup>69</sup>For definition, see Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, 25. Sperl's division of Abbasid *qaṣīdehs* is compatible with the tripartite classical definition of *qaṣīdeh* by Ibn Qutaybeh. The strophe and its themes are in *nasīb* or *tashbīb*, while the themes of antistrophe represent the patron in the *raḥīl/madīḥ* (praise) section. *Madīḥ* is the section praising the patron.

<sup>70</sup>Ṣā'ib, *Divān*, 3587.

بر مراد این بلند اختر بود گردان سپهر  
برنتابد از خط فرمان او سر آفتاب<sup>71</sup>

As long as these nine mills keep on turning with the water of [his] power  
As long as the sun rises from the east by the command of God

The sphere be desire of this highest star<sup>72</sup>  
And the sun will not disobey his commands.

Another example further illustrates the use of metaphors of light in *qaṣīdehs*. In the following lines, which constitute the beginning of a *qaṣīdeh* in praise of Shah ‘Abbās II, Ṣā’ib utilizes light and related ideas in four consecutive lines and in three discourses related to Safavid ideology. The presence of morning upon the king’s forehead is a metaphor for light and is a supernatural event, which was considered to be exclusive to the friends of God. By this description, Shah ‘Abbās II is identified as one of God’s friends (*awlīyā*). This idea presents the king as the leader of a Sufi order. In the second line, pure, noble (*sharīf*), and jewel or lineage (*gawhar*) are all images that remind the reader of attributes such as “clean” and “bright” that refer to the king’s stately genealogy, going back to Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm, the seventh imam. Safavid Shi’i genealogy holds a significant position for Ṣā’ib. He attests that the connection between the family of Safavids and the Prophet is a privilege for the Safavid kings, giving them the right to rule in other places as well. The idea of light is used in the third line to refer to the king’s military skills by connecting him to Imam ‘Alī. In the fourth line, the sun refers to the title “the shadow of God on Earth,” which is the basis of the third pillar of Safavid legitimacy and is in line with pre-Islamic notions of Persian kingship:

ای زمان دلگشایت نوبهار روزگار  
صبح نوروز از جبین بخت سبزت آشکار  
طینت پاک تو از خاک شریف بو تراب  
گوهر تیغ تو از صلب متین ذوالفقار  
صولت شیر خدا از بازوی اقبال تو  
می شود چون نور خورشید از مه نو آشکار  
آفتاب سایه پرور را تماشا می کند  
هر که می بیند ترا در سایه پروردگار<sup>73</sup>

You are the one whose pleasant reign is like the spring for the earth  
The green fortune of your forehead bears the morning of Nawrūz<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 358 8.

<sup>72</sup>*Buland Akhtar*, which here is an adjective replacing the noun (shah), is a trope for fortuity.

<sup>73</sup>Ṣā’ib, *Divān*, 358 8.

<sup>74</sup>The morning of Nawrūz is the appearance of Nawrūz, the New Year for Persian calendar (21 March), which is associated with light.

Your immaculate being is made from the blessed soil of the Father of Soil (Abū-Turāb, i.e. ‘Alī)  
The lineage of your blade goes back to the loins of Zulfiqār  
The awe of the lion of God (‘Alī) becomes visible in your might  
Just as the light of the sun begins to appear in the new moon  
It is the shadow-casting sun that they see  
When they look at you under the shadow of God.

Images dealing with the king’s virtues play an important role in legitimizing the Safavid king as the rightful ruler. Shah Ṣafī has the right to rule not only because of his genealogy, but also because he possesses virtues that no other kings possess. Ṣā’ib, in a eulogy for Ṣafī, describes the king with taqaddus (sacredness/holiness) along with adjectives such as “bright-hearted,” “dervish-like,” and āyat-e khudā (God’s sign) to combine the characteristics of both Sufis and imams and to argue for the religio-political authority of the king:

چون تقدس بود غالب بر مزاج اشرفش  
داشت دایم خاطرش از عالم خاکی غبار  
هیچ رازی بر ضمیر روشنش پنهان نبود  
ابجد او بود خط سرنوشت روزگار  
باطنش درویش و ظاهر پادشاه وقت بود  
داشت پنهان خرقة در زیر لباس روزگار  
آب می شد از گناه دیگران آزر م او  
آیتی از رحمت حق بود و عفو کردگار<sup>75</sup>

Because his noble temperament inclined towards the holy,  
The dust of the earthen world would irritate his soul

No secret was hidden from his pure spirit  
His name’s numerical value marked the fate of the world<sup>76</sup>

He was a Dervish on the inside and the king of his time on the outside<sup>77</sup>  
Underneath his worldly garment, he had a Sufi cloak

His dignity would feel remorse for the sins of others  
He was a sign of the mercy and forgiveness of the creator.

<sup>75</sup>Ṣā’ib, *Dīwān/I*, 1378.

<sup>76</sup>Literally, *abjad* (“alphabet”), a word formed from the first four letters of the Semitic alphabet. In particular, it refers to the use of letters as numbers (*ḥisāb-e abjad*), the numerical values of the letters following the original letter sequence found in the older Semitic alphabets. Krotkoff, “Abjad.”

<sup>77</sup>*Bāṭin* means “inner,” “inward,” and “hidden,” etc. It contrasts with the exterior and what is apparent. Sufis believe every individual has a *bāṭin* (the inward self), which when cleansed with the light of one’s spiritual guide, elevates a person spiritually. In this verse the poet describes the king with spiritual soul as a dervish inwardly, but a king on the outside.

Ṣā'ib develops the idea of a Safavid king as a spiritual leader by applying the title *murshid-e kāmil* or considering 'iṣmat (infallibility) for his patron, a feature that generally is reserved for Sufi leaders and imams:

تا به لوح آفرینش نقش ایجاد تو بست  
 بوسه زد بر دست خود کلک قضا بی اختیار  
 مرشد کامل تویی سجاده ارشاد را  
 تا شود نور ظهور صاحب الامر آشکار  
 گرچه بر فرمانروایان جهان فرماندهی  
 سر نمی پیچی ز فرمان خدا در هیچ کار  
 دین و دولت را تویی فرمانروای راستین  
 گر چه در روی زمین هستند شاهان بی شمار  
 همچو سبایه کز انگشتان شهادت حق اوست  
 دین حق قایم به توست از خسروان روزگار  
 از رسوخ اعتقادات آسمان بنیاد شد  
 چون بروج آسمانی مذهب هشت و چهار  
 بیضه اسلام از سنگ حوادث ایمن است  
 عصمت ذات تو تا شد آفرینش را حصار  
 در حسب ممتازی از فرمانروایان جهان  
 در نسب داری شرف بر خسروان نامدار<sup>78</sup>

After it limned your figure on the tablet of creation  
 The pen of fate kissed its own hand in admiration

You shall be the perfect guide for the rug of sovereignty  
 Until the day when the reappearance of the Owner of Authority (the twelfth  
 imam) starts to shine light

Even though you command the commanders of the world,  
 You never disobey God in any of your deeds

You are the true ruler of religion and state  
 Although there are numerous kings on Earth

Like the index finger, who has the privilege of testimony among all the fingers  
 The religion of truth relies on you, of all the kings on Earth

By the firmness of its tenets, the religion of eight and four (Twelvers) reached the  
 skies  
 Like the twelve houses of the Zodiac

<sup>78</sup>Ṣā'ib, *Divān*, 3588.



Islam is immune from the stones of time  
As long as the innocence of your being protects the whole creation

Your glory makes you unique among the rulers of the world  
Your lineage gives you advantage over renowned kings.

Furthermore, the poet claims “perfect knowledge” for the king that was granted to him by God’s will.<sup>79</sup> Divine knowledge was understood as knowledge that could be gained without conventional education. It is achieved by God’s grace and attention towards specific individuals, such as prophets and imams:

هر چه باید با خود آورده است ذات کاملش  
فارغ از کسب کمالات است چون قدوسیان  
دارد از علم لدنی بهره چون اجداد خویش  
پیش او طفل نو آموزی است عقل خرده دان  
فطرت والای او بی زحمت تعلیم و درس  
صاحب تیغ و قلم گردید در اندک زمان<sup>80</sup>

His perfect being has all it needs in itself  
Like heavenly creatures, he is not in need of acquiring perfection

Like his forebears, he has access to divine knowledge;  
Petty-minded Reason is like a small child in front of him

His elevated nature is above teaching and education  
He became the master of the sword and the pen in no time.

The way Şā’ib praises his patrons is different in terms of structure and content from how Faṣīḥi writes for Shah ‘Abbās II. Faṣīḥi’s *qaṣīdeh*, similar to Salīm’s *qaṣīdeh* in praise of Shah Şafī I, did not make a direct affiliation between Shah Şafī and the house of the Prophet. He started his praise for the king with the king’s political authority, which soon shifted to the king’s generosity and his other personal characteristics. The poet did not center his praise on the political authority of the king; instead, he speaks of the king’s personal traits such as magnanimity and a hot temper:

ز پرده پرده ساز جهان نوا برخاست  
که فر شاه صفی تخت و تاج را آراست  
دهان سکه چو نامش گرفت پر زر شد  
زبان خطبه ثنایش سرود کامرواست

<sup>79</sup>It is a knowledge that could be achieved with no education. This knowledge comes to the heart of *abl-e qurb* (the people of proximity).

<sup>80</sup>Ja’fariyān, “Şā’ib Tabrizī va mashrū’iat-e salṭanat-e Şafavī.”

به نیم موجه دلش از را کریم کند  
 سپهر الحق دریا دلی چنین می خواست  
 مرض ز ملک طبیعت گریخت از بیمش  
 همین عقیم به دورش سپهر حادثه زاست  
 بهار خلقش عطری فشانند بر عالم  
 که هر کجا خس و خاریست همچو گل بویاست  
 شکفت در جگر لاله نیز غنچه داغ  
 اگر سیاه دلی نشکفت گل سوداست  
 چو اوست قبله شاهان زبان ثنایش گفت  
 به راستی که زبانم به کام قبله نماست  
 ستم به عهدش همچون دفینه در خاک است  
 جهان به دستش همچون سفینه بر دریاست<sup>81</sup>

From every single fret of the worlds' instruments raised a melody  
 Because Şafi's *far* beautified the throne and the crown

The mouth of coin became gold as it mentioned his name,  
 The praising tongue of his oration is a prosperous song

[the king, by] showing half of his generosity makes a jealous heart generous  
 The sphere definitely needed such a person, with a heart like an ocean

In fear of him, illness fled from the kingdom of nature,  
 The same barren [nature] creates misfortune around him

The spring of his good nature spreads perfumes throughout the world  
 (for this reason) the thorns smell like flowers

In the heart of the tulip, the black brand [of love] blossomed  
 But the black-hearted, like clay, do not bloom

Because he is the *qibleh* (aim) of other kings the tongue praised him,  
 The tongue in my mouth shows the direction of *qibleh*

Oppression in his age is buried beneath the ground,  
 The world in his hand is like a ship on the sea.

Faṣīḥī's language in a *qaṣīdeh* that he writes for Shah 'Abbās gives a caring, sympathetic portrait of the king. This is not the image of an awe-inspiring king but rather of a king whose presence drives out illness and brings prosperity. This language continues when the poet describes the sorrow following Shah 'Abbās I's death. The sacred and

<sup>81</sup>Faṣīḥī, *Divān*, 207.

spiritual characteristics of the king demonstrated itself in the influence that the king had over the world:

شها چو جد تو آن شاه آسمان خرگاه  
به عزم سیر بهشت از سر جهان برخاست  
جهان چو مردم چشم بتان سیه پوشید  
سپهر چون مژه صفهای فتنه می آراست  
به نیم لحظه تو گفتی که آفتاب منیر  
خمیرمایه ی شام و شب غم و یلداست  
ز باد حادثه بنشست آسمان به زمین  
ز موج اشک زمین همچو آسمان برخاست<sup>82</sup>

Oh king! When your forefather, the king whose tent was like a sky  
Left the world aiming to visit the heavens,

The world wore black, like the pupils of the beautiful young idols  
While the sphere, like [their] eyelashes, adorned the lines of tumult

As if in a second the brightest sun  
Became molded [like dough] into night, the night of grief and of Yaldā

From the blow of this incident the sky fell to the ground  
Waves of tears lifted the ground to the sky.

The poet compares the advent of Shah Ṣafī to a new sun for the world bringing justice with it:

که ناگه از افق غیب صبح دولت تو  
طلوع کرد و جهان را به عدل و داد آراست<sup>83</sup>

When suddenly the brightness of your kingship from the horizon of the world of  
the unseen  
Arose and beautified the world with justice and fairness.

The poet applied no expressions of Alid sentiments or Mahdism to praise the king. The king Faṣiḥī represented is not a Shi'i king. The king is divine, and the world responds to his spiritual character, but this spirituality does not relate to his role as a Shi'i leader of the empire.

As seen, in some of these panegyrics there are no indication of patterns that usually and extensively were used in other materials to discuss the king's legitimate right to rule. The lack of references to those dominant patterns points to the limited audience of these materials.

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 208.

### Conclusion

This paper, through an analysis of numismatic and architectural evidence, in addition to royal investiture orations, enthronement ceremonies and panegyrics, has argued that the main elements of the Safavid ideology—similar to the pre-Islamic Persian kings, possessing the spiritual characteristics of the Sufi saints, and ruling as the shadow of God on earth—were not uniformly emphasized throughout Safavid history. A different combination of these ideologies appears in various materials and places to encourage acceptance of the Safavid monarchs as legitimate kings, substitutes for a just imam, and Sufi leaders. Coins that traveled over the Persian empire's borders emphasized the idea of a world-conqueror Shi'i sovereign king. However, the cultural materials distributed within the Persian empire's borders benefited from a language that, as Babayan argued, demonstrated an interest in showing respect to Imam 'Alī and the family of the Prophet. Additionally, it drew from the stories of *Shāhnāme* and the idea of Persianate kingship to make ties between the Safavid dynasty and the pre-Islamic Persian kings, who were revered as sacred kings and the appointees of God. Nevertheless, the interest in Shi'ism does not appear in most of the panegyrics that are dedicated to Safavid kings. These poems, in terms of praising kings, do not offer a significant change from poems written for Sunni Muslim kings. This paper argues that despite the differences in legitimizing patterns in these cultural materials, there was no change or shift in the main ideology of the Safavid rulers. Indeed, a combination of ideologies that existed before the Safavids and were practiced by people of different culture and religion allowed the Safavid monarchs to spread their power wide and find roots among the people.

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