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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

LITERARY – CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE SAFAVIDS IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RESEARCHES

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK

The relevance and scope of the topic. The Safavids, one of the most powerful and influential dynasties in the history of Azerbaijan and the Turkish world, have always been a central focus for researchers. Many scholars have contributed to this field, particularly Western historians. There are various perspectives on this topic and differing theories about the origins of the Safavids. While revisionist, new analytical perspectives in Western Oriental studies are highly valued, fixed stereotypes continue to hinder research on the origins and ideology of the Safavids.

In the study of the topic, the "Azerbaijani literature: history and problems (selected works)" by Hamid Arasli, one of the Azerbaijani researchers who wrote about the statehood, ideology, literature and cultural policy of the Safavids (Baku: 1998), Azizagha Mammadov's "Shah Ismayil Khatai" (Baku: 1961), Ogtay Efendiyev's "Azerbaijan Safavid Dynasty" (Baku: 1993), Nargiz Akhundova's "Кавказ и великие туркские империи" (Baku: 2012), Tofiq Najafli's "Foreign Policy of the Safavid Dynasty of Azerbaijan" (Baku: 2020), "Political relations of the Safavid Empire of Azerbaijan with Turkestan Khanates" (Baku: 2021), Rahima Dadashova's "Last period of the Safavids (in English-language historiography)" (Baku: 2003), Rafael Huseynov's "Yokhdan var" (Baku: 2014), Pasha Karimov's "17th century Azerbaijani lyrics" (Baku: 2011), Parviz Kazimi's "Library work in Azerbaijan during the Safavid era" (Baku: 2008), Ahmad Guliyev's "Socio-political situation of the Safavid Dynasty of Azerbaijan in the middle of the 16th century: based on the "Travelogue" of Michel Membre" (Baku: 2011), Huseyn Yazdi's "Iran during the Safavid Era" Ph.D. dissertation on the subject, etc. sources were used. This and many other works are of great scientific importance in the investigation of the intended problem.

Among Western researchers, prominent figures such as Edward Brown, Roger Savory, Vladimir Minorsky, Mahammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Irene Melikoff (originally Azerbaijani), David Morgan, Charles Rayneu, Jan Rypka, Paul Smith, Richard Tapper, Ihsan Yarshater, Charles Henry Parker, Michel Mazzaoui, Andrew Newman,

Alexander Hyu Morton, Kolin Mitchel, and others have made their contributions to the study of the literary and cultural environment of the Safavid period.¹

Numerous studies have focused on the Safavid state, which has been a central subject for Western scholars for about a century. Unfortunately, today we see misconceptions emerging under a West-centric influence: political views, national, and religious biases continue to shape research in this field.

¹ Browne, E.G. *A Literary History of Persia* / E.G. Browne. –Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – vol 1. –2009. –521 p.; Savory, R. *Iran under the Safavids* / R.Savory. –Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, –2007. –277 p.; Minorsky, V. *The Poetry of Shah Ismail I* / V.Minorsky, –Cambridge: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, – vol.10, –1942. – pp.1006-1029; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi. *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam* / translator: D.Streight. – New York: State University of New York Press, –1994. –279 p.; Melikoff, I. *Abū Muslim, Le “Porte-Hache” Du Khorassan Dans La Tradition Épique Turco-Iranienne* / I.Melikoff. – Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, –1962. –160 p.; Morgan, D. *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* / D.Morgan. –Boca Raton: Routledge and CRC Press, –2016. –216 p.; Rineu, C. *Catalogue of the Turkish manuscripts in the British Museum* / C.Rieu. –London, –1888. –345 p.; Rineu, C. *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* / C.Rineu. – London: British Museum, –1875. –326 p.; Rypka, J. *History Iranian Literature* / J.Rypka. – New York: Springer Netherlands, –1968. –964 p.; Smith, P. *Sufi Love Poetry: An Anthology* / P.Smith. –Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, –2013. – 622 p.; Tapper, A. *Is There an Ethics for Historians?* // – Crawley: *Studies In Western Australian History*, –2010. № 26, –pp.16-36.; Tapper, R. *Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* / R.Tapper, – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, –1997. –456 p.; Yarshater, E. *Persion Poetry in the timurid and safavid periods* // –Cambridge: *The Cambridge History of Iran. The Timurid and Safavid Periods* edited by Peter Jackson Lecturer in History, –1986. vol.6. – pp.965-994.; Parker, Ch.H. *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800* / Ch.H.Parker. –Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, –2017. –272 p.; Mazzaoui, M. *The Origins of the Safawids: Sh'ism, Sufism, and the Gulat* / M.Mazzaoui. – Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, –1972. –109 p.; Newman, A.J. *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* / A.J.Newman. – London: I.B.Tauris, –2009. –281p.; Melville, Ch. *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* / Ch.Melville. – London: I.B.Tauris, –2009. –426 p.; Parker, Ch.H. *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800* / Ch.H.Parker. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, –2017. –272 p.

To restore historical justice, it is essential to reconsider these studies, to provide commentary, and to accurately evaluate biased approaches. Considering that Western researchers often view the rich culture created during the Safavid era as solely an achievement of the Iranian state and Persian-speaking peoples (while the terms 'Persian-speaking' or 'local Persian indigenous people' remain ambiguous), it becomes evident that a critical review of English-language research on the “Literary-Cultural Environment of the Safavids” is of great relevance and importance.

Analyzing Western scholarship on the Safavid dynasty and highlighting contradictions and discrepancies is a key issue for Azerbaijani researchers. Although much work has been done in this field for many years, a new approach is still needed. Presenting history merely as a sequence of catalogued facts does not meet the standards of modern analytical research. It is therefore vital to adopt an analytical and critical approach to history.

Accurately analyzing the role of Shah Ismail and his ancestors in the history of modern Iran and presenting it authentically to the global community is one of the crucial aspects of Safavid studies. Thus, there is a need to examine English-language studies on the literary-cultural environment of the Safavids to understand how and to what extent the Safavids have been studied by Western scholars, to uncover inaccurate approaches, correct misconceptions, and convey the truth to the world.

Object and Subject of The Research. The object of this research is the cultural environment of the Safavid state and the comprehensive analysis of Western approaches to this environment. To achieve this, the dissertation draws on English-language literature that reflects the literary and cultural environment of the Safavids, as well as research by Western literary scholars on this topic.

The subject of this dissertation is the examination of how the literary and cultural environment of the Safavids is portrayed in English literary and Oriental studies, including Azerbaijani literature from the Safavid era, the philosophical views of contemporary thinkers, and the presentation of the current cultural environment in the country as reflected in Western Oriental studies.

The Goal and Tasks of the Research. The goal of this dissertation is to examine the portrayal of the origins of the Safavids in English-language sources, including their sacred genealogies, spirituality, morality, and the historical events associated with these narratives. It also aims to analyze the presentation of the belief in the Twelve Imams, which forms the core of Safavid ideology, as depicted in Western Oriental studies.

The following tasks have been identified to achieve the objectives of this research:

- To identify the portrayal of the Safavids' ancestors, national backgrounds and Safavid sect in Western literature;
- To examine the deficiencies, distortions, and inaccuracies in the analyses of the literary-cultural environment of the Safavids in English-language Western sources;
- To analyze the cultural policy of the Safavids, as well as the government's patronage of literature in this period, and the contrasting opinions of Westerners about it;
- To demonstrate the representation of state patronage of biblioculture, book art, and miniature art during the Safavid era in English-language sources;
- To analyze the depiction of the development of music and literature in the Safavid state within Western Oriental studies;
- To examine the works of English authors that present the literary-cultural heritage of the Safavid era in world museums and libraries;
- To determine Western perspectives on the Qizilbash Turkmen movement;
- To uncover the representation of Shah Ismayil Khatai's identity in Western literature;
- To trace the depiction of the Safavid slave policy and its consequences in Western literature;
- To explore the esoteric religious philosophy of the Safavids and to analyze the treatment of the Ahl al-Bayt's transcendental philosophical heritage in Western Orientalism.

Methods of Research. The research employs both general scientific methods (formal logical analysis, systematic-structural

analysis, historical approach, and generalization of scientific and practical materials) and special scientific methods (comparative analysis, logical reasoning, statistical analysis.)

The Main Defended Provisions:

1. The right, controversial and wrong aspects of the reflection of the complete and realistic picture of the literary and cultural environment created by the Safavids in the English-speaking world orientalist are specified on the historical and cultural level.

2. The claims of Western scholars that literature did not flourish during the Safavid era are entirely unfounded. For instance, Shah Ismayil's son, Sam Mirza, recorded the names of approximately seven hundred notable poets and artists of the period, proving that such claims are far from the truth.

3. Some Western researchers assert that Khatai's "Divan" in Turkish was merely a tool to attract the Qizilbash, whereas Shah Ismayil's deep affection for and respect for the Turkish language suggest otherwise.

4. Claims in some works about Shah Ismayil Khatai that the Qizilbash venerated him as an "invincible god" are simplistic and historically inaccurate. This assertion by Western scholars shows either a fundamental misunderstanding of Sufism and Qizilbash philosophy or politically motivated, Western-centric biases.

5. For a long time, Western Orientalists equated national identity with geographical boundaries and languages. Although the Safavid shahs were of Turkish origin, this matter became contentious; in many Western texts, they were referred to as Persian shahs, and the Safavid state was represented as Iran (Persia).

6. However, many original artworks held in world museums and libraries today demonstrate that the Safavids were key representatives of Turkic-Muslim culture.

7. Western scholars on the Safavids often attempt to portray the Qizilbash forces as a major obstacle to the Safavids while depicting the predominantly Armenian-origin slaves, referred to as the "third force,"²

² Savory, R. Iran under the Safavids / R.Savory. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 2007.

as the true supporters of the Safavid state, describing them as "loyal and strong" pillars.

Scientific Innovation of the Research. The scientific innovation of the dissertation work is precisely that here, for the first time, the Safavid cultural environment, history, philosophy, politics loyal to the Sufi traditions, the sacred genealogy of the Safavids, the Turkish origin were investigated in a wider and more complex way, and the parameters of the literary and cultural development during the Safavid era were for the first time discussed by Western and Eastern scholars. views, as well as on the basis of the comparative analysis of authoritative taikhi-cultural sources.

Of course, while conducting research in this direction in Azerbaijani literary studies, the opinions of Western scientists were involved in the research. However, in those studies, the English-language sources that examine the Safavids from a historical context have been reported. In the current research work, the problem was looked at from a completely different direction, in a complex case and within the framework of modern scientific trends, and Safavi studies in Western literature were approached from a critical point of view. In the research work, the stereotypes related to the East, especially the Turkish states and cultures were analyzed and brought to the center of attention. This is one of the main scientific innovations of the work.

Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Research. The theoretical and practical significance of this scholarly research is substantial. This in-depth study has demonstrated that Western Orientalist scholars focusing on the Safavids have often overlooked the geographical context in their analyses. Considering that Armenian-origin scholars active in this field frequently attempt to distort historical narratives, there is a pressing need for national researchers to examine and analyze English-language sources on this topic.

The findings of this dissertation can serve as valuable resources for literary critics, historians, and art critics in their work related to the Safavids and can be integrated into the academic teaching process.

Approval and Application of Research. On the main provisions and results of the dissertation, 5 periodical scientific publications recommended for publication of articles in the Republic

of Azerbaijan, 1 article in a scientific publication included in the international summarizing and indexing system of philological sciences, and 4 theses and conference materials were published at various local and foreign conferences.

Name of Organization Where the Dissertation Was Performed. National Museum of Azerbaijani Literature named after Nizami Ganjavi, under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Structure of Dissertation. This dissertation has been written in accordance with the requirements set by the Higher Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It consists of an “Introduction” (10,316 characters), three chapters (first chapter: four paragraphs – 122,264 characters, second chapter: two paragraphs – 52,959 characters, third chapter: two paragraphs – 56,596 characters), a conclusion (4,914 characters), and a list of references. The total length of the dissertation is 247,049 characters.

MAIN CONTENT OF DISSERTATION WORK

In the **Introduction**, the relevance of the topic is justified, the scope of the study is defined, and the methodological bases and new scholarly analyses of this dissertation are outlined. The main defended propositions and the theoretical and practical significance of the research are emphasized.

The first chapter, titled “**The Ancestor, National Origin of the Safavids, and the Reflection of the Qizilbash Movement in Western Literature**”, consists of four paragraphs.

The first paragraph, “**Turkish Origin of the Safavids and the Safavid Sect: Truth and Misrepresentations in Western Literature**”, discusses how the Safavids' origin is a central issue for Western Orientalists. Key works in this field include E. Brown's *The History of Iranian Literature*, M. Mazzoui's *The Origin of the Safavids*, R. Savory's *Iran During the Safavid Period*, and A. Newman's *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*.

E. Brown, in his *History of Iranian Literature*, does not recognize

the Safavid dynasty as Turkic. He notes that Iran was governed by Turks and Tatars for 850 years but describes the Safavids as "real Iranians." He argues that the Safavids redefined "Iran" (Persia) as a nation, accusing them of religious chauvinism and associating the promotion of Twelver Shiism with "religious nationalism" against the Turks. Brown interprets the conflict between the Ottoman Sultan Selim, of Turkish origin, and the Safavid ruler Shah Ismayil as rooted in national hatred. However, this was not a "Turkish" versus "Persian" war but rather a struggle to establish a new Turkic empire in the lands of ancient Iran, which posed a threat to the Ottoman state

E. Brown, who discusses the legitimacy of the Safavid shahs, questions both the Turkic and Sayyid origins of Sheikh Safiaddin, the founder of the Safavid sect.³ He states that if Sheikh Safiaddin descends from Hamza, the son of Musa al-Kazim, his 'Turkicness' is impossible. Brown narrates the work "Safvat-as-Safa," a biography of the Sheikh written by Ibn Bazzaz around 1958, and laments that it reads more like a saint's biography.⁴

M. Mazzoui, in his work *The Origin of the Safavids*, poses the question: "*After all, who are these Turks and Turkmens?*" He argues that the Turks were brought by the Tatars (mistakenly referred to as Mongols by Western scholars), overlooking the fact that "Turkmen" means Turki-iman, referring to Oghuz Turks, primarily Azerbaijani Turks who converted to Islam. Mazzoui describes the Ardabil Sufis as nomads spreading through Iran, Iraq, and Anatolia and doubts even the most reliable sources regarding the Safavid origins. Referring to Iranian scholar Ahmad Kasravi, he concludes that the Safavids' claimed descent from Imam Ali was a fabrication by the followers of Sheikh Safi and the Safavid shahs.

In his work *Iran During the Safavid Period*, Roger Savory calls the Safavids "The owners of Ardabil" and presents some contradictory and unreasonable thoughts on their origins, although he ultimately confirms that they were Azerbaijani Turks. While Savory believes

³ Azərbaycan tarixi: Uzaq keçmişdən 1870-ci illərə qədər / red. S. Əliyarlı. – Bakı: Azərbaycan, – 2009. – s.34.

⁴ Browne, E.G. *A Literary History of Persia* / E.G. Browne. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – vol 1. – 2009. – p.40.

Firuz Shah Zarrin-Kulah, the first historically known member of the Safavid family, was a Sayyid from the Prophet's lineage, he also suggests that the dynasty's origins remain unknown. He notes, based on the German scientist Hinz, that Firuz Shah migrated from Yemen and was of Arab origin, and then, referencing Israeli Egyptologist David Ayalo, claims the Safavids were Turks. He asserts that Safavid rule rested on three pillars:

1. Charismatic authority in the tradition of ancient pre-Islamic Iranian kings;
2. Representation as the final descendant of the last Imam, Sahib az-Zaman;
3. The status of Murshidi-Kamil of the Safavid school.

Western scholars often claim that the Safavid connection to the Ahli-Beyt is a political maneuver, yet they fail to explain the widespread respect and reverence for this family and Sheikh Safiaddin Ishaq, the sect's founder.

Despite numerous pieces of evidence for the Turkic origins of the Safavid dynasty, David Morgan questions Sheikh Safi's background in his book *Iran in the Middle Ages (1040-1797)*, suggesting he was "*probably of Kurdish origin.*"⁵ However, he describes Shah Ismail as a Turk, stating, "*Ismail's aim was likely to establish a pure Turkmen empire encompassing Eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Western Iran, and Iraq, replacing the Aghqoyunlu state.*"⁶

David Morgan refers to the Safavids' commitment to the pure faith of Muhammad as an "extremist religious belief" and explains that the devotion of the Turkmens to Sheikh Junayd arose from their loyalty to Imam Ali, while the Qizilbash's loyalty to Shah Ismail came from his position as Murshidi-Kamil of the Safavid school.

In the second paragraph, titled "**Gizilbash Turkmen Movement and Its Reflection in Western Literature**", Bianca Maria Sgarci Amoretti describes the Gizilbash movement: "*This movement can be characterized as a local-ethnographic complex of religious thought extending across the geographical belt from Asia Minor to Azerbaijan,*

⁵ Morgan, D. *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* / D.Morgan. – Boca Raton: Routledge and CRC Press, – 2016. – p.107.

⁶ Ibidem.

and spreading particularly along the Libyan-Syrian borders during the period we studied. Its members were from Turkish tribes. However, the term 'Qizilbash' is ethnographically vague, as its meanings have varied across different times and places."⁷

The author incorporates ideological interpretations, suggesting that the term can mean "Iranian" in one context and "Asian" or "merchant" in another. It appears that, regarding the origins of the Qizilbash, most Western scholars present uncertain, unsubstantiated subjective views and attempt to obscure the truth.

The prominent Islamic scholar Shahzad Bashir states, "*The Qizilbash were Turkish tribes from Azerbaijan, Anatolia, Syria, and the Southern Caucasus, and were the supporters of the Safavid Sufis in the 15th century.*"⁸

Bianca Maria Sgarzia Amoretti surprises with the claim that the Twelve Imam religious doctrine of the Qizilbash originated from the Armenians. She attempts to associate this doctrine with small religious sects unrelated to the Qizilbash Turkic community and the Sufi philosophy.⁹

The modern Safavid scholar Kathryn Babayan, in her research titled *The Waning of Qizilbash*, writes: "*Juneyd, the grandfather of Shah Ismail, changed the direction of the sect while in Anatolia; the Safavid idiom crystallized as a blend of myths and symbols of Sufism, the culture of Ali's devotion, and Turkic-Mongol traditions.*"¹⁰

Kathryn Babayan, who sees the Safavid dynasty as central to Turkic culture and Sufism, artificially separates the dynasty from the Qizilbash: "*The Turkish-Mongol joint management concept defined the relations between the Qizilbash and their sacred leaders, the shahs. Two close forces—spiritual and political—formed a hierarchy of power*

⁷ Lockhart, L. *The Cambridge History of Iran* / L.Lockhart, P.Jackson. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 1986. – p. 630.

⁸ Bashir, Sh. *Shah Isma'il and the Qizilbash: Cannibalism in the Religious History of Early Safavid Iran* // – Chicago: History of Religions, – 2006. vol. 45. № 3, – p.235.

⁹ Lockhart, L. *The Cambridge History of Iran* / L.Lockhart, P.Jackson. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 1986. – p. 633.

¹⁰ Bashir, Sh. *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* / Sh. Bashir. – New York: Columbia University Press, – 2013. – p.136.

and loyalty unique to Safavid Iran.”¹¹

Martin Bernard Dickson discusses the term "Qizilbash" in his study *Shah Tahmasp and the Uzbeks* (1958): *“This term broadly encompasses the religious worldview of the entire Safavid community, its unique characteristics, and individuals connected to Safavid ideology. Notably, it was often used unreasonably and arbitrarily during the Safavid period (1500-1722) by foreign states that were aligned with them.”*¹²

Dickson states that, after Shah Ismail, Iran's population was divided into two classes: the Qizilbash and others. According to him, if the Qizilbash were Turks, then all others were Tajiks, who, in modern terms, are considered 'Persians.'¹³

It should be noted that the Qizilbash were Turkmen and that the majority of the Iranian population was Turkic-speaking, with only sectarian differences separating them. The Tajiks were a minority group.

Colin Mitchell, in his article "Am I My Brother's Keeper?", discusses the conflict between the Safavids and the Ottomans not from a religious or philosophical perspective but in terms of Persian-Turkish national relations before Islam: *“Each of these empires was defined by pre-Islamic classical traditions. The Ottomans “Each of these empires have been determined by classicism traditions until islam. The Ottomans trace their ancestry to the Turkish steppes, and the Safavids to the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties.”*¹⁴

Mitchell describes the culture of this region as “Iran-Islam” and emphasizes that all artistic works were created in the Persian language. Andrew Newman, following the same trend, suggests that the Tajik-origin population is more “clever, polite, and patient,” while the

¹¹ Babayan, K. *The Waning of the Qizilbash: The Temporal and the Spiritual in Seventeenth Century Iran* / K.Babayan. – Princeton: Princeton University, – 1993. – p.141.

¹² Dickson, M.B. *Shah Tahmasb and the Uzbeks (the Duel for Khurasan with Ubayd Khan; 930-946 / 1524-1540)* / M.B.Dickson. – Princeton: Princeton University, – 1958. – p.18.

¹³ Ibidem. – p.6.

¹⁴ Parker, Ch.H. *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800* / Ch.H.Parker. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 2017. – p.34.

Turkmens are depicted as cruel and brutal.

Richard Tapper, in his *Border Nomads of Iran*, uses misleading terms such as “Turkic nomads” and “shepherd nomads” when discussing the Qizilbash, thereby confusing the reader. He classifies Iran's tribes into three categories: the local Iranian people (small ethnic groups like Lur, Lak, Kurd, Baluch), Turkish immigrants, and Arabs. Although Tapper refers to these local groups as “Turko-Mongol nomadic tribes,” he admits that it is challenging to portray the Qizilbash as a later-arriving ethnic group in this region.¹⁵

Charles Henry Parker, in his work *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Era, 1400-1800*, aligns with the common trend among Western Safavid scholars: *“Ismayil and other Safavid shahs strengthen their powers in whole territory of Iran, at the same time they reduce the influence of radical mystical beliefs of qizilbash and restore the shiism as the superior religion”*¹⁶.

Hans Robert Roemer, in his study “The Safavid Period” from the Cambridge History series, seeks an explanation for the migration of Qizilbash Turkmens to the region in the 14th–16th centuries: *“How can one explain the interest of the Turkish tribal population in Iranian territory, which is neither Turkish nor Turkic-speaking, and their migration to this area?”*¹⁷

In the third paragraph, titled **“The Reflection of Shah Ismayil Khatai’s Identity in Western Literature”**, it is noted that Western scholars often interpret Shah Ismayil's identity primarily through his association with Shiism.

Hans Robert Roemer suggests that Shah Ismail's promotion of Shiism was not politically motivated but aimed at eliminating Sunnism¹⁸ and attempting to explain the sect's philosophy without distinguishing between the doctrine of the Twelve Imams and

¹⁵ Tapper, R. *Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* / R.Tapper. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 1997. – p.12.

¹⁶ Parker, Ch.H. *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800* / Ch.H.Parker. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 2017. – p.53.

¹⁷ Lockhart, L. *The Cambridge History of Iran* / L.Lockhart, P.Jackson. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 1986. – p.332.

¹⁸ Ibidem. – p.196.

Orthodox Shiism: *"If we examine every action of Shah Ismayil from an Islamic perspective, we find he was deeply influenced by the deification of Imam Ali by those around him, which inclined him more toward Shiism."*¹⁹

Bianca Maria Sgarcia Amoretti discusses the religious-philosophical significance of Shah Ismayil's ideology: *"He is a Sufi who was not only a mediator between humans and God but also closer to the Creator than any other being."*²⁰ She notes that he used his spiritual reputation for political purposes, presenting Shah Ismayil as an "extraordinary figure," a "military leader," and the "long-awaited leader" in her study titled "Timurid Dynasty and Religion in the Safavid Era."

Unfortunately, like other Western scholars who failed to grasp the essence of Sufi philosophy, Amoretti repeatedly labels Khatai as a "heretic" and claims that he declared himself as Ali and Allah.

H.R. Roemer refers to the Qizilbash as "fanatic politicians" and accuses them of being unable to integrate with the Ottomans due to their racism.²¹

Ronald Ferrier, in his study of trade relations during the Safavid era, writes: *"Shah Ismayil deliberately uses Iran as the stronghold of the Shia sect for his purposes during his reign by all means."*²²

Edward Browne, in his work *Iranian Literature*, claims that Shah Ismayil lived among the Armenians near Lake Van for a time, being cared for by them, according to the Italian traveler Angiolello. However, he also notes that this is not documented in any Iranian sources.

Browne describes the appearance and behavior of the 13-year-old Shah Ismayil based on accounts by his follower, the Italian trader Caterina Zeno: *"His inner world was in harmony with his outer beauty. Despite his young age, he was very intelligent and had*

¹⁹ Lockhart, L. *The Cambridge History of Iran* / L.Lockhart, P.Jackson. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 1986. – p.197.

²⁰ Ibidem. – p.634.

²¹ Ibidem. – p.223.

²² Ibidem. – p.427.

wise thoughts on every matter. He possessed strong reasoning, sharp perception, and such bravery that no one else could match him." ²³

A.H. Morton notes that several sources focus on the youth of Shah Ismayil, with special emphasis on works by Edward Denison Ross, Hasan Bey Rumlu, and Amir Mahmud Khandamir in his research titled "The First Year of Shah Ismayil in 'Afzal al-Tavarikh' and Other Sources." He considers Hasan Bey Rumlu's work to be the most reliable source to date and also refers to "Afzal al-Tavarikh," a manuscript by Fazli Isfahani from the era of Shah Abbas, housed in the British Library.

Yusif Jamali presents conflicting thoughts regarding the Sayyid genealogy of Shah Ismayil: *"We should note that the Persian blood in Ismayil's veins is very little. His followers and allies were mostly Turkmen tribes and Tatars who paid little regard to Persian ethnicity and language. Even Shah Ismayil learned Persian in Lahijan. It is also absurd to claim he is purely Turkish. Historians must remember the importance of deeply studying the history of their ancestors when presenting him as a noble Turk."* ²⁴ Consequently, modern English-language sources neither fully deny nor entirely confirm the Turkic origins of Khatai.

In the fourth paragraph, titled **"Slave Policy of the Safavids in Western Research,"** it is noted that Armenian-origin scholars at Western universities have created a myth that slaves played a founding role in the Safavid state. Currently, this viewpoint is supported not only by Armenian-origin English-language authors but also by most Western scholars of Safavid studies. One reason for this is the influence of Christian missionaries who visited the Safavid state.

S. Babayi, K. Babayan, I. Bagdians, and Masuma Farhad, in their work "Slave of Shah: New Elite of Safavid Iran," detail how slaves infiltrated the Safavid palace, created networks, and gradually

²³ Browne, E.G. A Literary History of Persia / E.G. Browne. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – vol 1. – 2009. – p.60.

²⁴ Haider, N. The Origins of the Shī'a Identity, Ritual and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa / N.Haider. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 2011. – p.14.

began to influence politics, religion, art, economy, and culture, initially covertly and then more openly.

William Floor, in his book *Safavid State Institutions*, states that slaves (Georgian, Armenian, Circassian) mostly came from the Caucasus region, with others, like the Kalmyks, brought from Russia, Central Asia, India, and China.²⁵

Kathryn Babayan writes: *“Shah Abbas I institutionalized the military and palace slave system, putting an end to the messianic aspirations and tribalism of the Safavids (referring to the belief in the appearance of the Messiah and Mahdi).”*²⁶

In reality, Shah Abbas had already built a vast empire, with the Safavid state's borders firmly established. Consequently, slaves were employed to manage tasks that the military-religious elite could not handle, filling the gaps that existed in the administration.

According to Babayan, the place of the Safavids' holy Sheikh-Murid ideology was supplanted by master-slave relations. Her explanation of the term “Shahseven” is also biased: *“The term ‘Shahseven’ originated here, where loyalty is shaped not by spiritual belief or tribal interest, but by personal relations and gains.”*²⁷ Babayan's intent is to undermine the significance of the Qizilbash, who have deep historical roots, while aristocratically downplaying the absence of slaves and presenting them as “loyal servants” of the Safavid state.

Kristina Kostikyan, in her research “European Catholic Missionary Preaching in Safavid Iran among the Armenian Population,” writes: *“Neither the Safavids nor the Ottomans harmed the Armenians who took refuge in these lands; instead, they treated them kindly when necessary.”*²⁸

Babayan states that Vizier Sari Taghi and Chief Architect

²⁵ Floor, W. *Safavid Government Institutions* / W.Floor. – Costa Mesa Mazda Publishers, – 2001. – p.168

²⁶ Babayan, K. *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* / K.Babayan, S.Babies, I. McCabe Baghdiantz. – London: I.B. Tauris, – 2003. – p.6

²⁷ Ibidem. – p.7

²⁸ *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age: International Contact and Political Development in Early Modern Persia* / edited by W.Floor, E.Herzig. – London: I.B. Tauris, – 2015. – p.23

Muhibbali Bey were slaves who rose to power with the support of Sharia officials. One point the author makes that is not in doubt: *“As a result, bisexual and ethnically marginalized groups served the Safavids in the 17th century, and the palace was under their control.*

*In return for their loyalty, these slaves gained access to the king’s most valuable possessions, his wives and sons, and his treasures.”*²⁹

The collection *Iran and the World during the Safavid Era*, jointly published by U. Flor and E. Herzig, contains many materials about Armenian activities during the Safavid period. From this collection, we learn that Armenian priest Hakop Markarian traveled to the Safavid state in 1595 to establish an anti-Ottoman alliance between the Shah and the Pope and personally delivered Shah Abbas I's letter to the Pope.³⁰

Giorgia Rota writes about how the Catholic Church viewed Armenians as allies and used them in the Ottoman-Safavid conflict: *“Throughout this century, the Venetian government benefited from the Armenians to fulfill their traditional role of protecting Catholics in the Middle East. This mission of the Holy Vatican and France extended not only to Ottoman territory but also to Safavid Iran.”*³¹

The second chapter of this dissertation, titled **“View of Esoteric Religious Philosophy of the Safavids,”** consists of two paragraphs.

In the first paragraph, titled **“Ahl al-Bayt Mashab and the Approach of Western Scholars to the Twelve Imam Shiism of the Safavids,”** it is noted that M.A. Amir-Moezzi argues that the concept of Imamate is not merely religious but also a scientific one. He emphasizes that, like all sciences, Imamate has technical details, though he laments that the knowledge of these details was confined

²⁹ Babayan, K. *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* / K.Babayan, S.Babies, I.McCabe Baghdiantz. – London: I.B. Tauris, – 2003. – p.21

³⁰ *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age: International Contact and Political Development in Early Modern Persia* / edited by W.Floor, E.Herzig – London: I.B. Tauris, – 2015. – p.152

³¹ *Ibidem.* – p.149

only to the Imams themselves.³² After the Safavids came to power, Imamate began to be taught as a science, with its inner knowledge found in ancient books inherited from the Imams or transmitted orally. Amir-Moezzi writes, *“This science contains the greatest mystery of the schools, and in written sources, the great secrecy surrounding its application is maintained. This science was understood only by the disciples of sects who knew the secret.”*³³ He analyzes various sources and concludes that the Safavid understanding of wisdom and ignorance differs significantly from the Western perspective.

Orientalist Henry Corbin also stresses the importance of the esoteric view: *“The greatest aspiration of all believers is to discover the true meaning of holy writings. It is believed that the main meaning lies deeper, in the spiritual realm, hidden beneath the literal meaning.”*³⁴

In the second paragraph, titled **“Attitude of Western Scholars to the Ideological Doctrine of the Safavids,”** it is noted that Corbin examines Iran's transition from Mazdaism to Shiism in his work *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*.³⁵ He presents ancient Shiism as a continuation and new manifestation of Mazdaism in his article “The Mystic World of Hurqalya.”

In *Being One with the One*, Corbin accepts that the concept of *tawil* never denies the revelation of the Prophet, and that Muhammad is the final prophet. According to al-Arabi, the revelation of the Prophet will continue until the return of the Mahdi al-Muntazar. Thus, just as there is a “seal of prophecy,” there must

³² Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi. *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam* / translator: D.Streight. – New York: State University of New York Press, – 1994. – p.50.

³³ Ibidem. – p.51.

³⁴ Corbin, H. *The Voyage and the Messenger: Iran and Philosophy* / H.Corbin. – Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, – 1998. – p.99.

³⁵ Corbin, H. *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth. From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran* / H.Corbin. Translated from the French by N.Pearson – Princeton: Princeton University Press, – 2016. – p.48.

also be a “seal of Imamate.”³⁶

The imagery of "divine light" in Shah Ismayil's poems in his Divan is a manifestation of the Creator in the face of the Mahdi, who bears the seal of the personhood of Imamate, carrying the booklet:

*“Ah, divine light, show your face to the devout and energetic person,
Who is it that the infidel should bring to the truth of faith now?”*³⁷

K. Corbin expresses regret over the limited study of Shiism, which is the foundation of the Safavid ideological doctrine: *“Shia Gnosticism was a unique esoteric form of Islam, which, during the Safavid era, turned into the state religion and formed a new official ulama interested only in sharia.”*³⁸

The scholar refers to Sheikh Ahmad Ahsai when explaining the Imamate: *“Beginning with the Prophet Muhammad and his daughter Fatima, the dynasty of the 12 Imams—the continuation of the Prophet’s mission in the pleroma of the 14 innocents—is regarded not only as the manifestation of divine light on Earth but also as the starting impulse.”*³⁹

The second chapter of this dissertation, titled **“View of Esoteric Religious Philosophy of the Safavids,”** consists of two paragraphs.

In the first paragraph, titled **“Ahl al-Bayt Mashab and the Approach of Western Scholars to Twelve Imam Shiism of the Safavids,”** Khatai praises Imam Ali as the honor and pride of humanity, describing him as the model of the Twelve Imams:

*“The pride, honor, and prestige of the days,
The mention of the interests of common people and the elite,*

³⁶ Corbin, H. Alone With the Alone. Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi / H. Corbin. – Princeton: Princeton University Press, – 1998. – p.29.

³⁷ Şah İsmayıl Xətai. Əsərləri / tərt. ed. Ə. Səfərli, X. Yusifli – Bakı Şərq-Qərb, – 2005. – s.159.

³⁸ Corbin, H. The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism / Translated from the French by N. Pearson. – Jackson: Omega Publishing, – 1994. – p.58.

³⁹ Ibidem. – p.58.

*The model of humble and distinguished Imam,
God is one; Muhammad and Ali are His representatives".* ⁴⁰

The thesis that the Safavids' religious philosophy, or "High Islam," has its roots in folk Islam is presented as a central idea in some European sources.

Roemer and Amoretti touch upon this topic, but Irene Melikoff is the scholar who extensively develops it. She writes, *"Though Qizilbashlik was closely related to the Twelve Imams, it represented a unique Shiite worldview with features such as the veneration of Shah Ismail, who was believed to be Tanasukh, the reincarnation of Ali, the manifestation of God in human form."* ⁴¹

Shah Ismayil Khatai also shows in his *gerayli* that the Forty Saints regarded him as a confidant:

*"I arrived at the shrine of the Forty Saints,
"Come here, oh sweetheart," they said.
I greeted them with respect,
They invited me to come to the sacred".* ⁴²

According to Melikoff, the names of Imam Ali and God (Al-Ala) are united. In Shah Ismayil's poems, it is impossible to determine whether he sees himself as the manifestation of Imam Ali or God:

*"This is in my control, O Ali al-Murtaza,
Your union is the remedy for every human pain and suffering!"* ⁴³

Melikoff shows that in his *Divan*, Shah Ismayil does not

⁴⁰ Şah İsmayıl Xətai. Əsərləri / tərt. ed. Ə.Səfərli, X.Yusifli – Bakı Şərq-Qərb, – 2005. – s.243.

⁴¹ Melikoff, İ. Hacı Bektaş Efsaneden Gerçeğe / İ.Melikoff. – İstanbul: Cümhuriyet Kitapları, – 2009. – s.70.

⁴² Şah İsmayıl Xətai. Əsərləri / tərt. ed. Ə.Səfərli, X.Yusifli – Bakı Şərq-Qərb, – 2005. – s.350.

⁴³ Şah İsmayıl Xətai. Əsərləri: [2 cildə] / tərt. ed. Ə.Məmmədov – Bakı: Azərənşr, – 1975. – c.1. – s.71.

separate the names of Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali, which reflects Khatai's intention to portray Muhammad as the external and Ali as the internal embodiment of Islam.⁴⁴

The third chapter of this dissertation, titled **“Cultural Policy of the Safavids and the Attitude Toward It in English-language Literature,”** consists of two paragraphs.

In the first paragraph, titled **“The Government's Patronage of Literature in the Safavid Era: The Attitude of Western Scholars to the Development of Music and Literature,”** it is noted that, as John Richard Perry emphasized, ‘Safavidness’ and its socio-political structure were positioned between two transmissions — “Iranian and Turkish” — creating an ethno-linguistic hybrid.⁴⁵

Edward Browne supports this view, claiming: *“Sultan Salim wrote only in Persian, while Shah Ismayil, who wrote under the pseudonym Khatai, wrote only in Turkish.”*⁴⁶ Khatai's lines reflect his love for the Turks and the Turkish language:

*“Oh you, Turkish fairy, you are beloved, marvel of an artificial spring,
After seeing the words of your brow are “Allahu Akbar.”*⁴⁷

Or:

*“As it is eaten, the Arab property, the abode, is exhausted,
Whoever it may be within Baghdad, the Turkman will seize it”.*⁴⁸

Winter writes in his study *Iranian Science in Safavid Times* that many prominent writers, scientists, and physicians left Iran for

⁴⁴ Melikoff, İ. Hacı Bektaş Efsaneden Gerçeğe / İ.Melikoff. – İstanbul: Cümhuriyet Kitapları, – 2009. – s.287, 289.

⁴⁵ Mitchell, C. *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran. Empire and Society* / C.Mitchell. – London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, – 2011. – p. 178.

⁴⁶ Browne, E.G. *A Literary History of Persia* / E.G. Browne. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – vol 1. – 2009. – p.13.

⁴⁷ Şah İsmayıl Xətai. Əsərləri / tərt. ed. Ə.Səfərli, X.Yusifli – Bakı Şərq-Qərb, – 2005. – s.67-68.

⁴⁸ Ibidem. – p.90.

India during the Safavid era. Ihsan Yarshater argues that Shi'ism in the Safavid period limited literary development, yet he notes that in Sam Mirza's Tohfe-ye Sami, over 700 poets were active during that time.⁴⁹

In Gulshani-shuara by Ahdi Baghdadi (also known as Tazkireyi-arbabi-Safa), there are references to 384 poets and their works. Most of these poets were followers of the memoir's author and lived in Iran or Azerbaijan, or moved from the Safavid state to the Ottomans. Notably, *"Ahdi's elder brother, Rizayi, was a friend of Sam Mirza, son of Shah Ismayil Khatai."*⁵⁰

Unlike Browne, Savory argues that Turkish literature experienced a new renaissance during the Safavid era. Poets like Orfi Shirazi and Saib Tabrizi played significant roles in literature, although they were active in the Mughal Empire rather than in Safavid Persia. Browne writes about the migration of literary figures: *"Often these poets were not descendants of migrants but people who came from Iran to India for money. Once they earned enough, they returned."*⁵¹

According to Savory, Safavid poets did not write eulogies for themselves but only for the Imams. For this reason, many poets preferred the Mughal palaces, where they felt more valued, leading to a new Persian poetry style known as Sabk-i Hindi.⁵²

Savory suggests using the term "Safavid genre" instead of Sabk-i Hindi, which is often presented as the "Mughal genre." He describes Safavid shahs as great poets, musicians, and artists who personally oversaw these fields.

The Divan of Shah Ismayil Khatai was widely known, even inspiring Muhammad Khudabanda Shah, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Fahmi.' Shah Tahmasp's court included poets such as

⁴⁹ Sam Mirzə Səfəvi. Töhfeyi Sami / tərt. ed. Ə.Bağirov, red. T.Kərimli. – Bakı: Elm və təhsil, – 2022. – 528 s.

⁵⁰ Əhdi Bağdadi. Gülşan-i şüəra / transfon., nəşrə. hazır, ön söz: T.Əliyeva. – Bakı: Elm və təhsil, – 2024. – s.7.

⁵¹ Browne, E.G. A Literary History of Persia / E.G. Browne. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – vol 1. – 2009. – p.203.

⁵² Savory, R. Iran under the Safavids / R.Savory. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 2007. – p.204.

Mirza Sharaf Jahani, Maulana Heyratini, and Sadig Bey Afshar. While Safavid shahs did not accept eulogies, they valued works written for the Imams. *“Poets were not only rewarded, but the rewards were so valuable that they encouraged poets to write more and stay at the Safavid court.”*⁵³ R.Savory and D. Blow note that Shah Abbas gave the poet Sami gold equal to his own weight.

R.Savory argues that Safavid poets were innovators who rejected old styles and rhythms, seeking new poetic forms like the “Tarsa” genre — short, meaningful epigrams.⁵⁴ Generally, all courtiers grown at the Safavid palace had written poems. Chronicler Isgandar Bey Munshi was no exception.⁵⁵

Savory writes that a unique branch of Safavid literature was well-developed. He expresses surprise that E. G. Browne considered this literature boring and difficult. The scholar highlights two great philosophers of the Safavid era: Mirdamad (Ishraqi) and Molla Sadra (Sadreddin Shirazi). According to Savory, philosophy and music were vital areas of spirituality, with music permeating every aspect of social life. During this period, the number of musical instruments increased significantly, and music became integral to warfare.

Charles Reynaud notes that he found works by prominent Safavid-era poets like Muhammad Amani, Ruknaddin Masud Masihi, and Govsi Tabrizi in the British Museum.⁵⁶ He writes that R. Masihi dedicated his poem Varga and Gulsha to Shah Abbas I, while G. Tabrizi, influenced by Fuzuli, wrote during the reign of Shah Suleyman. Browne also notes that Muhammad Tahir Vahid Qazvini, a Safavid courtier, wrote a Divan of ninety thousand verses and rose to the position of vizier in the palace of Shah Abbas II, serving as the official historian.⁵⁷

⁵³ Savory, R. Iran under the Safavids / R.Savory. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 2007. – p.207.

⁵⁴ Ibidem. – p.210.

⁵⁵ Ibidem. – p.213.

⁵⁶ Rieu, C. Catalogue of the Turkish manuscripts in the British Museum / C.Rieu. – London, – 1888. – p. 301.

⁵⁷ Dadaşova, R.İ.Səfəvilərin son dövrü (ingilisdilli tarixşünaslıqda) / R.İ.Dadaşova. – Bakı: Nurlan, – 2003. – s.306.

Amelia Gallagher, in her article “Creation of Shah Ismayil in Silsilat al-Nasabi-Safaviyya,” analyzes Khatai's poems, noting that he called himself “The Eye of God” and “The Magic of God.”

*“When there was no earth, no sky, I existed from eternity,
I existed before the most precious of gems.
I made the gem as valuable as water, and this stone
encompassed the entire world
I was the Creator of the earth, the heavens, the divine
throne”.*⁵⁸

Like other Western scholars, A. Gallagher cannot explain this anthropomorphism and even accuses Shah Ismail of equating himself with God. In her study *The Fallible Master of Perfection: Shah Ismail in the Alevi-Bektashi Tradition*, Gallagher notes that Shah Ismail wrote his Divan in both Turkish and Persian. She observes that only a portion of the poet's Divan in Persian is known and compares Khatai to other Azerbaijani poets of the time: *“Shah Ismail did not achieve the literary accomplishments of his contemporaries, Habibi and Fuzuli.”*⁵⁹ However, it is important to note that while Khatai's Divan may be weaker in artistic terms compared to the works of these poets, it is irreplaceable for the Qizilbash in ideological terms.

Safavid ideology was closely linked to the people. Under the Safavid dynasty, folk epic thinking and religious heroic stories were organically connected, leading to the creation of religious heroic epics such as *Abu Muslumnama*. This epic, which spread throughout the Turkic world, particularly among the Qizilbash, who took on the mission of being “Ali's army,” was used more actively as a means of Shiite propaganda.⁶⁰ It was recited in Anatolia and Iran with great enthusiasm and became part of the cultural heritage of the urban

⁵⁸ Şah İsmayıl Xətai. Əsərləri: [2 cildə] / tərt. ed. Ə.Məmmədov – Bakı: Azərneşr, – 1975. – c.1. – s.256.

⁵⁹ Gallagher, A. *The Fallible Master of Perfection: Shah Ismail in the Alevi-Bektashi Tradition* / A.Gallagher, – Montreal: McGill University, – 2004. – p.118.

⁶⁰ Melikoff, I. *Abū Muslim, Le “Porte-Hache” Du Khorassan Dans La Tradition Épique Turco-Iranienne* / I.Melikoff. – Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, – 1962. – p.104.

disciples of the Safavids in Ardabil.

Kathryn Babayan notes that even after the death of Shah Ismail, his sons remained loyal followers of Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt, despite it being forbidden by a fatwa from the high-ranking Ulama Al-Karaki. However, there is no historical confirmation that Tahmasib I supported this fatwa.

Karl Rachel, in his book *To Praise the Past: Turkish and Medieval Heroic Poetry*, mentions the famous Koroghlu ⁶¹ epic, describing it as the most magnificent written folklore of the Safavid era.

In the second paragraph, titled **“The Development of Biblio Culture, State Care for Book Art and Miniature Art during the Safavid Era in English-language Sources,”** it is noted that the artists who lived and worked in the Safavid palace, and who were directly influenced by this environment, produced great artistic masterpieces. Friedrich Spuler's article, *Carpets and Textiles*, supports this idea: *“The most beautiful Iranian carpets date back to the Safavid period. The arts of carpet weaving, textile production, especially fabric production (satin, velvet, and silk with gold and silver), reached their peak during this period.”* ⁶²

Vafa Afshar, in her article *Safavid Chemistry in the Eyes of European Travelers*, uses Safavid material culture samples and records from various sources for comparative study, concluding: *“During the reigns of Safavid rulers who deeply valued the arts, particularly Shah Abbas I, artisans in Iran were engaged in producing cloth, ceramics, silk, carpets, porcelain, and metal products, leading to the flourishing of applied arts, including pottery.”* ⁶³

Drawing on the accounts of European travelers such as Don

⁶¹ Reichl, R. *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry* / R.Reichl. – New York: Cornell University Press, – 2000. – p.140.

⁶² Spuhler, F. *Carpets and textiles* // – Cambridge: *The Cambridge History of Iran. The Timurid and Safavid Periods* edited by Peter Jackson Lecturer in History, – 1986. vol.6. – p.712.

⁶³ Afshar, V. *Safavid ceramics through the eyes of european travellers* // – Chanakkale: *Journal of arts*, – 2020. vol.3, № 2. – p.86.

Garcia de Silva Figueroa, Adam Olearius, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Raphael du Mans, Jean Chardin, Nicolas Sanson, Engelbert Kaempfer, and Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, the material culture of cities like Shiraz, Isfahan, Tabriz, Shamakhi, Kerman, Zarand, Kashan, and Yazd left a lasting impression on visitors.

Compared to the 16th century, Azerbaijani applied and visual arts developed further in the following centuries. The Herat art school gave way to the Tabriz art school, whose first outstanding representative, Kamaladdin Behzad, is called “the Raphael of the East” by European and American scholars. “Alongside Behzad, artists such as Agha Mirak Tabrizi, Sultan Muhammad Tabrizi, Muzaffar Ali Naghash, and Hafiz Tabrizi shaped the general style of this school. Their works, housed in European and Soviet art museums and manuscript collections, are considered examples of extremely high art.”⁶⁴

The Shaykh Safi carpet, originally decorating the Shaykh Safi mausoleum and now displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, is one of the greatest achievements of Safavid decorative art. English-language sources describe it: “*In the center of this carpet, adorned with ornaments typical of early Safavid culture, is a medallion, while its edges feature leaves and curling flowers. The rug belongs to the Tabriz carpet school.*”⁶⁵

Sh. Kanbi writes: “*If we look at the book art of the period, we see that the Battle of Chaldiran and its aftermath had a serious impact on Safavid art. The Ottomans took not only artworks but also artists to their palaces.*”⁶⁶ In *Calligraphers and Artists* by Gazi Ahmed Qumi, translated by V. Minorsky (1606), information about prominent calligraphers and miniature painters of the time is

⁶⁴ Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatı tarixi: [üç cildə] / red. heyəti H.Arslı, M.Quluzadə, M.C.Cəfərov – Bakı: Elm, – c.1. – 1960. – s.297.

⁶⁵ Hillyer, L. The Ardabil Carpet - a new perspective / L.Hillyer, B.Pretzel // MENA Carpet News. – 2013, November. – v.2, i.5. – p.14.

⁶⁶ Canby, Sh.R. Persian Painting / Sh.R.Canby. – Northampton, Massachusetts: Interlink Publishing Group, – 2005. – p.77.

provided, reflecting a positive attitude toward the art. ⁶⁷

K. Babayan, Masuma Farhad, Susan Babay, and Ina Baghdadi Mekeyb, in *Slaves of Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran*, provide information on the book treasures collected by Prince Brahman Mirza, the ruler of Gilan during the reign of Tahmasib I, later inherited by his son Ibrahim Mirza. The director of this library was Dust Muhammad, the founder of the Tabriz miniature school. ⁶⁸

The authors mention famous calligraphers like Riza Abbasi, Muhammad, Sadig Bey, and Siyavush, noting that, like other art forms, book development was associated with the reign of Shah Abbas I. However, Sh. Kanbi suggests that the deaths of Shah Ismail II and Muhammad Khudabanda alone spurred the development of these artists. ⁶⁹ Babayan links the rich art examples in Shah Abbas's palace to the existence of the Armenian-Christian society in Isfahan, without referring to any reliable source. ⁷⁰

English-language studies often highlight the role of slaves in the arts, citing examples like the Georgian-origin calligrapher Siyavush, who received an excellent education in the palace. However, they frequently omit the names of Turkic-Muslim calligraphers such as Muhammad Saleh Isfahani, Ali Riza Abbasi, and Abdulbagi Tabrizi Imam Muhammad Riza.

S. Babayi emphasizes the role of slaves in Safavid city planning in his article *Safavid Architecture: "The most prominent among the famous neighborhoods was New Julfa, owned by Armenian traders (located south of the Zayende River, west of Chaharbagh)."* ⁷¹ He repeatedly mentions Armenian houses with

⁶⁷ Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi, al-Husaini. Minorsky, V. *Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, son of Mir-Munshi / Translated from the Persian*. V.Minorsky. – Washington, – 1959. – p.49.

⁶⁸ Kazimi, P. *Səfəvilər dövründə Azərbaycan kitabxana işi / P.Kazimi*. – Bakı: Bakı Universiteti nəşriyyatı, – 2008. – s.67.

⁶⁹ Canby, Sh.R. *Persian Painting / Sh.R.Canby*. – Northampton, Massachusetts: Interlink Publishing Group, – 2005. – p.91.

⁷⁰ Babayan, K. *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran / K.Babayan, S.Babies, I. McCabe Baghdiantz*. – London: I.B. Tauris, – 2003. – p.116.

⁷¹ Mathee, R. *The Safavid World / R.Mathee*. – London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, – 2022. – p.528.

large balconies without sufficient evidence.

German traveler Engelbert Kaempfer, in his work *Exotic Charm of Iran, 1684-1688: Travels and Observations*, notes that by the end of the 17th century, many beautiful Muslim architectural examples, such as mosques, madrasas, baths, and caravanserais, already existed in Isfahan.⁷²

Stephen Frederic Dale, in *Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Muslim Empires*, states that the Safavid painting school owed much to the book art of the Timurids. He mentions Badi al-Zaman Mirza, the son of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, and Kamaladdin Behzad, calling them a bridge between Timurid and Safavid artists, and holds these artists in high regard.⁷³

William Bayne Fisher, in his research *Safavid Architecture*, claims that the architectural monuments of the Safavid, Seljuk, Ilkhanid, and Timurid periods are similar.⁷⁴ As a result of succession among the Turkic dynasties, artists migrated from one country to another, allowing the school of famous architects to continue and develop across other Turkic states.

Charles Rieu writes about this in the introduction to *Supplement to the Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*: “*The first part of the catalogue contains the names of 947 Persian manuscripts, which include works on theology, history, geography, and multidisciplinary topics.*”⁷⁵ He describes these works as rare and valuable written monuments.

Masuma Farhad, in *The Art of Quran Composition in Turkish and Islamic Art*, states: “*With the Safavids' accession in 1501, the production of fine manuscripts spread from the capital, Tabriz, and its palace workshops to other cities. The art of the Quran had a long historical development. The Safavids were successors to the*

⁷² Kaempfer, E. *Exotic Attractions in Persia, 1684–1688: Travels and Observations* / E. Kaempfer. – Washington: Mage Publishers, – 2018. – p.191.

⁷³ Dale, S.F. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals* / S.F. Dale. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 2011. – p.170.

⁷⁴ *The Cambridge History of Iran (The Land of Iran)* / W.B. Fisher – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – vol.1. – 2011. – p.761.

⁷⁵ Rieu, C. *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* / C. Rieu. – London: British Museum, – 1875. – p.6.

Aghqoyunlu state, but their Qurans were calligraphically distinctive.” ⁷⁶ Farhad mentions notable book artists such as Ghasemali al-Naravi, Shah Mahmud Nishapuri, Hasan al-Baghdadi, and Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Khalili al-Tabrizi, who worked on the Quran during the Safavid period. ⁷⁷

Unfortunately, the unique art created during the Safavid dynasty (which ruled for more than two centuries) is rarely highlighted in English-language literature. Instead, its development is often attributed to foreign cultural influences rather than being recognized as an achievement of Turkish dynasties.

In the **Conclusion** of this dissertation, the main findings are summarized as follows:

- Several Western Safavid scholars claim that science, art, and literature declined during the Safavid period, citing the migration of some prominent artists from the Safavid state to the Mughal Empire. They attribute this migration to religious and ethnic persecution. However, considering that Sultan Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, was a follower of Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid state, and shared Turkic ethnicity, this claim lacks scholarly support.

- In English-language literature, especially in works by authors of Armenian origin, the stories of artists who left the Safavid state to join the Ottoman and Mughal courts—or were forcibly taken due to wars and religious politics—are often exaggerated. The cultural achievements developed in the Safavid territory are attributed to the skills of Armenian slaves and the influence of Christian missionaries. Western Safavid scholars often overlook the fact that free poets and artists voluntarily moved from one court to another, accepting invitations for greater profit and opportunity.

- Some Western scholars argue that Safavid ruler Shah Ismail Khatai and certain high-ranking officials wrote literary works in Azerbaijani to win over the Qizilbash and Turkic dynasties that helped them gain political power. However, Shah Ismail, being an Azerbaijani Turk by ethnicity, naturally wrote his Divan in Turkish.

⁷⁶ The Art of the Qur'an: Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts / M.Farhad, S.Rettig. – Washington: Smithsonian Books, – 2016. – p.107.

⁷⁷ Ibidem. – p.108.

Moreover, Khatai not only composed literary works in Turkish, but also used Turkish in some diplomatic correspondence and court etiquette.

- Western scholars often ignore that Shah Ismail was not only a ruler but also the Murshid-i Kamil and spiritual leader of a significant sect. They claim that his conversion of the Safavid-Qizilbash ideology and Twelve Imams' Shi'ism into state ideology served political aims, suggesting his Divan was in Turkish to attract Turkic-speaking Shi'ites in Ottoman territories. However, Khatai's promotion of Shi'ism stemmed from his role as a Murshid, and his advocacy for the Turkish language reflected his love for his own ethnicity.

- Although Western scholars have produced detailed research on the Safavids, their approach is often politicized. In English-language sources, the Safavids of Turkic origin are frequently presented as belonging to Iranian peoples (Persians and Kurds) or claimed to be of Arab origin.

- Some English-language sources incorrectly depict the Qizilbash as a nomadic, culturally unimaginative society, akin to shepherds searching for pasture. This dissertation challenges this false narrative by critically analyzing English-language literature and comparing it with historical facts.

- Referring to exhibits in European and American museums and documents preserved in ancient libraries and archives, it can be asserted with certainty that the Qizilbash were not only followers of the Safavid sect but also a military elite with deep religious and philosophical views, holders of vast libraries, and creators of a rich cultural heritage.

- English-language studies suggest that the Qizilbash viewed Shah Ismail Khatai as an "invincible god" and were devoted to him due to this mystical belief, often citing various historical events to support this claim. However, research by reputable scholars of the period's historical and literary sources shows that this view is unfounded. Shah Khatai was highly respected as the murshid of the Qizilbash because he was considered a descendant of the Prophet.

- Western researchers often emphasize the role of Georgian,

Armenian, and Tajik slaves, creating a fictitious “third force” concept related to the Safavids' slave policy, suggesting that the long-term and successful rule of the Safavids was due to the subtle internal political activities of the slaves. However, the political and economic achievements of the Safavid state were rooted in their genealogical connection to the Holy Prophet's family and their inheritance from the Aghqoyunlu dynasty.

- The portrayal of Armenian-origin slaves as a constructive and reforming force with a major role in Safavid politics, economy, literature, and art by Western scholars is claimed without sufficient evidence. In reality, these slaves, who rose to high status by exploiting the trust of Safavid dynasty members, dealt a damaging blow to Turkish-Muslim culture. Due to Armenian forgery, many examples of Safavid art are now presented and promoted in major museums and libraries as the achievements of slaves.

The main content and provisions of the Dissertation work is reflected in the follow articles and theses:

1. Səfəvilərin qulam siyasəti və bu məsələnin müasir Qərb ədəbiyyatında əksindən nümunələr // – Bakı: Risalə, Araşdırmalar toplusu, – 2017. № 1, – s.112-122.
2. Səfəvi incəsənəti və qulamlar Qərb alimlərinin gözü ilə // – Bakı: Risalə, Araşdırmalar toplusu, – 2018. № 15, – s.229-234.
3. Early imamism in Western historiography // XII International Congress on Social Sciences, China to Adriatic, – Aphganistan: – 23-24 october, – 2020, – pp.41-50.
4. Iran or Persia, aspect of stereotypical approach to the cultural syncretism in Western historiography // The VIII International scientific symposium dedicated to the 135th anniversary of Uzeyir Hajibeyli, – Turkey: – 13 november, – 2020, – pp.141-148.
5. İngilisdilli ədəbiyyatda qızılbaş türkmən hərəkəti // – Bakı: Filologiya məsələləri, – 2023. № 4, – s.408-415.

6. Səfəvi dövründə kitab mədəniyyətinin inkişafı: dünya muzeyləri və kitabxanalarında səfəvi dövrünün ədəbi-mədəni irsi // – Bakı: Dil və ədəbiyyat, – 2023. № 3 (123), – s.323-328.
7. Şah İsmayıl şəxsiyyəti Qərb yönümlü araşdırmalarda // – Bakı: Dil və ədəbiyyat, – 2023. № 2 (122), – s.232-237.
8. Покровительство литературе в эпоху Сефевидов // Uluslararası sosial və beşəri bilimler kongresi, Selçuklu Üniversitesi, – Beyşehir: – 27-29 ekim, – 2023, – c.718-724.
9. Səfəvilərin türk mənşəyi və bu barədə Qərb ədəbiyyatında yol verilən təhriflər // – “Türk dünyası: ortağ mədəni dəyərlər, müasir reallıqlar və gələcəyə baxış” adlı I Beynəlxalq konfrans, – Bakı: 19-23 dekabr, – 2023, – s.45-50.
10. West-centric approaches in Safavid historiography // – Kiev: Scientific notes of V.I.Vernadsky Taurida National University, – 2023. № 6. – pp.176-185.

The defense will be held on 28 October 2024 at 14⁰⁰ at the meeting of the Dissertation council BED 1.31 of Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan operating at National Museum of Azerbaijan Literature named after Nizami Ganjavi of the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan Republic

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