

# THE KOJAJANI FAMILY AND IRAN'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS (13-16TH CENTURY)\*

KOJAJANI AİLESİ VE İRAN SİYASİ GELİŞMELERİ (13-16. YÜZYIL)

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## Abstract

The analysis of power gaining process and, the rise and fall of families influencing social developments can be an appropriate way to study history. The period from the Mongol invasion of Iran to the rise of Safavid dynasty marks one of the most complicated epochs of history in social and cultural perspectives. Perhaps the emergence of religious identity crisis resulting from the absence of a caliphate position is the most outstanding social and cultural incident in this period. Like many other regions, Azerbaijan region and Azari families were affected by these incidents. Identifying influential families in this region will be a good guide for an in-depth study of political, social and cultural developments of this time. One of the influential families in that period was Kojajani Family with a rural origin and which has risen to fame through business activities, mystical tendencies and interests. During these developments, the family shaped their political, social and cultural thoughts and acts. This paper intends to clarify and analyze in detail the trend Kojajani Family has been through ever since its formation in the 7th century through the 16 century. The findings of the paper indicate that families reposition themselves with the changes in conditions and make use of social instability as an opportunity to gain power. Throughout their lives, the outstanding members of the Kojajani Family acted according to the political circumstances. The actions of the family members have taken various forms, e.g., from mystical Qutb (infallible and trusted spiritual leader) to Sheikh ul-Islam or the chief judge, from mere spiritual-religious rank to the position of viziership (ministerial position). The family's shift from Sunni to Shia school of jurisprudence and finally their use of the title of Seyyed or direct descendant of the Prophet constitute the political, social, and intellectual curve of developments in this dynasty. The findings of this paper show that the Kojajani Family could progress better during the era of political and military instability rather than during stability. Not only instability did not prevent their progress but also paved the way for them. The heads of the family through their expedient actions were preparing the grounds for progress. They achieved the position of Chief Judge from their mystic positions and later attained the ministerial position. They changed their religion from Sunni Muslims to Shia Muslims. These changes were timely and were concomitant with the sociopolitical conditions of the society.

**Keywords:** Sufism, Azerbaijan, Ilkhanids, Torkmen, Tabriz, Kojajani Family.

## Öz

Güç kazanma sürecinin analizi ve ailelerin (hanedanların) sosyal gelişmeleri etkileyen yükseliş ve düşüşlerinin analizi, tarih çalışmak için uygun bir yol olabilir. İran'ın Moğollar tarafından istila edilmesinden Safevi hanedanının yükselişine kadar olan dönem, sosyal ve kültürel açıdan tarihin en karmaşık dönemlerinden birine işaret etmektedir. Belki de hilafet makamının yokluğundan kaynaklanan dini kimlik bunalımının ortaya çıkması bu dönemin en göze çarpan sosyal ve kültürel olaydır. Diğer birçok bölge gibi Azerbaycan bölgesi ve Azari aileleri de bu olaylardan etkilenmiştir. Bu bölgedeki etkili aileleri belirlemek, bu dönemin siyasi, sosyal ve kültürel gelişmelerini derinlemesine incelemek için iyi bir rehber olacaktır. Kırsal kökenli Kojajani Ailesi o dönemin nüfuzlu ailelerinden bir tanesidir ve ticari faaliyetleri, tasavvufi eğilimleri ve ilgileri ile ün salmışlardır. Bu gelişmeler esnasında aile, kendilerinin siyasi, sosyal ve kültürel düşünce ve eylemlerini şekillendirmiştir. Bu makale, Kojajani Ailesi'nin 7. yüzyıldan 16. yüzyıla kadar var olan düzenleri içerisindeki gidişatı netleştirmeyi ve ayrıntılı olarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları, ailelerin koşullardaki değişikliklerle kendilerini yeniden konumlandıklarını ve sosyal istikrarlılığı güç kazanmak için bir fırsat olarak kullandıklarını göstermektedir. Kojajani Ailesi'nin seçkin fertleri hayatları boyunca siyasi şartlara göre hareket etmişlerdir. Aile üyelerinin eylemleri, mistik Kutub'dan (yanılmaz ve güvenilir manevi lider) Şeyh-ül İslam veya baş kadılığa, manevi-dini rütbeden vezirlik pozisyonuna (bakanlık pozisyonu) kadar çeşitli biçimler almıştır. Ailenin Sünni fıkıh'tan Şii fıkıh okuluna kayması ve nihayet Seyyid veya doğrudan Peygamberin soyundan gelen unvanını kullanmaları, bu hanedandaki gelişmelerin siyasi, sosyal ve entelektüel kıvrımını/grafiğini oluşturur. Bu makalenin bulguları, Kojajani Ailesi'nin istikrardan ziyade siyasi ve askeri istikrarsızlık döneminde daha iyi ilerleyebileceğini göstermektedir. İstikrarsızlık, ailenin ilerlemesini engellemediği gibi onları da açmıştır. Aile liderleri/reisleri, yaptıkları yerinde hareketlerle ilerlemenin zeminini hazırlamışlardır. Onlar mistik mevkiilerinden Kadılık makamını elde ettiler ve daha sonra bakanlık makamına ulaştılar. Dinlerini Sünni Müslümanlıktan Şii Müslümanlığa çevirdiler. Bu değişiklikler yerindeydi ve toplumun sosyo-politik koşullarıyla eşzamanlıydı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tasavvuf, Azerbaycan, İlhanlılar, Türkmenler, Tebriz, Kojajani Ailesi.

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## Introduction

Reviewing the process of how influential families rise and fall is an important subject in historical studies. What role does the local families play in historical developments? This paper intends to present a pattern in genealogical studies and, analyze it with the history of an influential family in Tabriz. This study pattern has been achieved, indeed, through the study of several families in Tabriz, but the paper's focus is more on a certain family, Kojajani (aka Kojaji) Family, in a time span of 13-16th century. The study of this family can shed light on history of genealogy and help gain an in-depth understanding of political and social developments in the aforesaid period.

The study of the Kojajani Family can shed light on a stage of the sociopolitical history of Azarbaijan in a time period of two centuries. This family is among tens of families that played an effective role in the developments of the society.

## 1. Literature Review

Kojajani Family's role in political life of Azerbaijan region is outstanding enough to attract the attention of researchers. The existing research papers, however, do not appropriately address certain issues. The majority of these papers have been written by local researchers with non-scientific and unmethodological approaches, such as books by Mohammad Alvansaz Khoyi (2014) titled *Ahval va Goftar Imamzadeh Khajeh Seyyed Mohammad Kojajani (Biography and Discourses of Khajeh Mohammad Kojajani)*, Mahmoud Roofehgar Haq (2008) *Andar Ahvalat Khajeh Mohammad Kojajani va Khandanash (On Biography and Personal Status of Khajeh Mohammad Kojajani and His Family)*, and *An Introduction by Masoud Rasti and Ehsan Pour-Abrisham to the Divan-e Ghias al-Din Mohammad Kojajani (Ghias al-Din Mohammad Kojajani's Collection of Poetry)* (Kojajani, 2016). Mohammad Ali Tarbiat (n. d.) in his book, *(Daneshmandan-e Azarbaijan (Scientists of Azerbaijan)*, only focuses on one person belonging to the Kojajani Family, Khaja Sheikh Mohammad Kojajani. Alvansaz Khoyi's book focused on Khajeh Bozorg (Grand Master) Khajeh Abdollah Mohammad and contains relatively similar data taken from *Tazkira Khajeh (Biography of Khajeh)* by Palasi Shirazi (1947) and other books of biographical anthology. Moreover, it relied on inscriptions of the tombs and gravestones to introduce the family as direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Roofehgar Haq (2008) in his work has confined himself to biography and personal status of Khajeh Sheikh Mohammad (aka Khajeh Sheikh) with sparse and scattered data on family members. Much of the data in his work come from unauthentic sources and, the quotations and narrations have not been analyzed with a critical approach.

## 2. The Rise and Fall of the Kojajani Family

The Kojaji Family was among the families in Tabriz who rose to fame and power through establishing links with major Sufi, Sunni, and Shia currents as well as connections with the ruling political dispensation. The family began its intellectual life with Sunni mystical current and continued its social life via establishing relations with Sufi mysticism, and then gradually inclined to politics. Unlike many other families, the Kojajanis did not take the path of seclusion and indifference or uprising, and they did not participate in any political movement to alleviate the social problems. Rather,

they cultivated the strategy of participation in political power through undertaking government positions without any restriction. The position of chief judge in the local governments of Tabriz was accepted for this purpose.

The Kojajani Family gained enough political and administrative-religious experience to move towards occupying non-religious administrative institutions such as the position of vizierate, which was more based on administrative and financial resume. In this period (early 16th) a big change took place in their genealogy, i.e. their recognition as a Seyyed or direct descendant of the Prophet (Hafez Abru, 1993, v.2, p735). The result of this change in Kojajani genealogy was essential for them since it reinforced the power of the family in administrative positions. It may be claimed that the dynasty might have used the title of Seyyed in any possible way before gaining further promotions in administrative jobs. Since then (15th), the leader of the family – Khajeh or Sheikh Kojajani – has been addressed with the prefix of Seyyed (Hafez Abru, 1993,v.2, p735). Chronologically speaking, this change in Kojajani Family coincides with the drastic changes in the Safavid dynasty. The Kojajani Family acted in a sophisticated manner, avoiding open and transparent opinion sharing. They used this tactic for further success (Hafez Abru, 2001,v.1,p.506).

With the rise of the Safavid dynasty and establishment of a new political and social order in Iran, the Kojajani Family maintained their occupational and genealogical positions. Understanding the social, political, and cultural developments, the family highlighted its title of Seyyed to occupy new administrative positions in the newly established political order, although they were inferior in comparison to their previous positions. It can be claimed that their position was downgraded during the Safavid rule, resulting from the family's issues such as the incapacity and weakness of the agents and the structure outside the reach of the family. The agent problem of the family during this period marks the inability of the family leaders in assessment and management of threats posed by political opponents, moreover there were some personal misconducts during the reign of Shah Tahmasb I. However, the external factors such as the relocation of Safavid capital city from Tabriz to Ardebil, Qazvin and Isfahan led to the declining administrative power of Kojajani Family. Building their wealth and power in Tabriz, the Kojajani Family failed to adapt to the ongoing situation. The change resulted in the rise of rival and powerful families in the changing capital cities. The competition for administrative positions was expanded with many incentivized and powerful families. To adapt to the new order, they had to accept administrative positions in other cities and provinces, which led to the scattering of family members, while they had no powerbase in the new regions. Therefore, their distance from their city of origin resulted in breaking solidarity and genealogical disunion, so that some key officials from this family were born not in Azerbaijan, but in central cities of the country. They even failed to support the young family members politically in other branches of the government. Another factor behind the setback in Kojajani Family's position in new order was the weakened mystical rank of the family's leaders. Upon the death of Khajeh Ali bin Khajeh Mohammad, from the Khajeh Haji branch, in 1479, the Sufi branch of this family weakened because for almost one century the family had concentrated on administrative-mystical position

of viziership. The Sufi branch of the Kojajani Family failed to maintain a balanced growth with the administrative branch. The weakened Sufism in the Kojajani Family had no efficiency in the new order in which Shah Ismail was identified as the “Grand Murshid” (Grand Teacher or Mentor) of all Sufi disciples. As a matter of fact, Sufi currents could create or gain new positions mostly in non-religious (quasi secular) governments like the Turkmans, through relative and acquired sanctity. Therefore, the other Sufi families had no way but to admit their religious and mystical hegemony in their path toward transformation. In other words, in the case of the Turkman rule instead of the Safavid reign, the three wings of the title of Seyyed, Shia school of jurisprudence and Sufism at the disposal of Kojajani Family could help them grow again. However, the Safavid rulers had constructed their new order based on certain characteristics and did not allow any family to use them for their progress.

### **3. Formation of the Kojajani Family’s Mystical School of Thought based on Theoretical Mysticism**

The ancestor of the Kojajani Family was Pir Mohammad from the village of Kojajan near Tabriz. He had mystical tendencies and earn his livelihood from farming (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.2, p.11). Discovering interest in mystics in his grandchild Mohammad, he did his best to rear the child according to his mystical manners. Under Ghias al-Din Abu Abdollah Mohammad, son of Seddiq, son of Pir Mohammad (known as Grand Master, (1217-1278) Kojajani Family was at the apex of mysticism, something that never happened again in the history of this family. Kojajani Family attribute their spiritual chain of affinity to mysticism and Pir Mohammad, also known as Seddiq Harami Kordi, and then to Junaydi Baghdadi. Kojajani mysticism is a type of eclectic Sufism of Junaydi asceticism and Ayyari (chivalry) practice of Seddiq Harami Kordi, which has caused dualism in their cognitive teaching and acts. Although the Grand Master could attract followers from outside of Tabriz, like Sheikh Hassan Palasi Shirazi (Palasi Shirazi, 1947, pp.6-10), the mystical realm of this dynasty was confined to Azerbaijan region. Ibn Karbalayi’s account on Khajeh Yusef Heyran Dehkharagani’s trip to villages near Kojajan and intrinsic perception of the existence of a mystic in the nearby (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.2,9.12), indicates that Kojajani Sufism and the Grand Master of this family were yet to rise to fame at that time in all Azerbaijan regions, Dehkharagan for instance. Dehkharagan is not far from Kojajan, however Sheikh Yusef had felt the lights of the Grand Master’s Sufism there. He is one of the 28 true and qualified mystics endorsed by Sheikh Hassan Bolghari (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v1,p.140). Other accounts, however, indicate that the Grand Master was active in Azerbaijan, so – like many other masters - he could not institute Kojajani Sufism outside Azerbaijan.

The Grand Master’s important mystical viewpoints maybe outlined as following:

- 1- Emphasis on safeguarding Sharia law in words and action.
- 2- Belief in love and kindness to human beings.
- 3- Critical approach to exoteric and intellectual sciences and prioritizing mystical sciences (Ibid, p.10).
- 4- Critical approach to Sufism. He did not accept Sufism with any tendencies, and affiliations and stated that as improbity persists in exoteric sciences and scholars, “there are many faults in the sequence of poverty with fathomless hesitation and agitation” (Ibid,p. 12).

5- Belief in the fact that attention to inward self (Batin) and esoteric inception of the truth is steadier and stronger than exoteric inception.

6- A dualistic approach to material activities and acquisition of government positions. He neither rejected this approach like many pious mystics nor applauded it. (Ibid, p.317, Palasi Shirazi, 1947, p. 32).

His viewpoints are closer to Sunni than Shia school of jurisprudence. In the areas of rational decency and indecency, the creation of Satan, and the issue of sin, he has particularly followed the Ash'ari standpoint (Movahhed, 2011, pp.125- 164).

Upon the death of Grand Master in 1278, his line of Sufism was continued by the lineage of his brother Khajeh Ebrahim, since he did not have an offspring. In the beginning, Khajeh Ebrahim had a critical attitude toward his brother's thoughts and acts, and unlike the Grand Master, he paid more attention to exoteric issues until he gained intellectual alignment with his elder brother by his guidance (Ibn Karbalayib, 2004, v.2,p 39). The reality may be even otherwise, i.e. Khajeh Ebrahim's sons might have fabricated their father's belief in Sufism. On his mystical thoughts there is only one account belonging to Ibn Karbalayi. Khajeh Ebrahim took an important step toward promotion and expansion of the family by relocating it from the village of Kojajan to Tabriz. He had three sons named Khajeh Ahmad Shah (b. 1320), Khajeh Haji, and Khajeh Seddiq (who had no male offspring) and Sufism continued by the first two sons. Attribution of the title of "Shah" to Khajeh Ahmad indicates his priority over his brothers in mystical affairs. One of the great achievements of this family is the establishment of a big garden in Kojajan named "Bagh-e Pir" the land of which belonged to Khajeh Seddiq son of Khajeh Ebrahim (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.2: p. 39; Hasheri Tabrizi, 1992: p. 204).

The death of Khajeh Ahmad Shah and Khajeh Haji, concurrent with the fall of the Ilkhanids and the outbreak of political crisis in Iran, especially in Azerbaijan, marked a turning point in the history of the Kojajani Family. Upon the appearance of one of the most outstanding family members, i.e. Khajeh Ghias al-Din Sheikh Mohammad (known as Khajeh Sheikh, living in 1386) the family prioritized political and material activities over mystical affairs.

#### **4. Gaining Power under the Leadership of Khajeh Ebrahim and Khajeh Sheikh**

In this period, the Kojajani Family was under the leadership of two main branches headed by Khajeh Haji and Khajeh Ebrahim II. Upon the death of Khajeh Ebrahim II, his branch fell into the two branches of Khajeh Sheikh and Khajeh Sheikh ul-Islam. Each branch had many sons who inherited the power from their fathers without any official division of responsibilities by the family. The position of chief sheikh or the leadership of the family was transferred from a branch to another based on eldership, mystical knowledge and experience as well as individual talents. Another point adding to the complexity of this issue was the lack of formation of the tradition of Khanqah management based on the previous tradition (acquired) or new tradition (hereditary). Unlike Safavid sheikhs, the Kojaji Family failed to design and enforce a regular and disciplined tradition of Khanqah management, while the tradition was believed to be shared by the entire family.

Theoretically speaking, the Kojaji Family's orientation toward material activities has its roots in the Grand Master's line of thought, although other causes such as the family's history of agriculture, horticulture, and business may be also involved. The life of Khajeh Ebrahim II (living in 1356) coincided with the outbreak of social crises. In his mystical wayfaring, he learned much from Sheikh Esmail Sisi, a renowned gnostic of Azerbaijan (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v2.p.32). Khajeh Ebrahim maintained extensive political relations and cooperation with the Jalayirids. He assumed the position of Sheikh ul-Islam or the chief judge, a religious-political institution, while his sons and nephews served under Jalayirids as well. After the death of Ebrahim II, Khajeh Sheikh took the office of chief judge. Upon the victory of Malek Ashraf Chooapani and his mounting pressure on the elite and elderly of Azerbaijan, these outstanding pro-Jalayirid personalities with religious and mystical origin, had to leave their hometown and live in self-exile. Sheikh Sadr al-Din Safavi left for Gilan, Sheikh Mohy al-Din Barda'ee took refuge in the Mongolian khanate of Golden Horde and Sheikh Ebrahim Kojajani settled in Shiraz (Ibn Bazaz Ardebili, 1994, p.1063) before heading for Hajj and the Levant. Mohy al-Din Barda'ee tempted Jani Ghurbani the ruler of Golden Horde to invade Tabriz (Hafez Abru, 2001, v.1, p291). Accordingly, Timurid sources, Khan Beigi, Khajeh Ebrahim's wife, had turned her house into a center of struggle against Malek Ashraf dominion in Tabriz. Upon his arrest, Malek Ashraf was taken to Khand Beigi's house, where he was murdered (Hafez Abru, 2001.v.291-294; Samarqandi, 1993, v.2, p.352).

Although until the second half of the 13th century, Kojaji leaders took important steps to boost the political power of the family. Significant measures for gaining name, fame, and power for the family were taken by Ghias al-Din Mohammad known as Khajeh Sheikh, son of Khajeh Ebrahim and the author of a collection of poetry who managed well to expand the name and fame of the family from Azerbaijan to other provinces and even to the Levant. His father's exile by Malek Ashraf paved the ground for him to gain power in the reign of the Jalayirids. He established very close relations with Sultan Uweis and his son Sultan Hussein of the Jalayirids and gained the title of chief judge as a hereditary position for his family. He earned additional religious and mystical credit for his family by constructing public bathhouses, schools, Dar al-Hadith (House of Traditions), Bayt ul-Ta'leem (Religious Schools), mosques and Khanqah in Tabriz. He also took a trip to Mecca for pilgrimage, and to the Levant and Anatolia (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.1, p.41). During the ten-year tour of the Levant and Iraq, he increased the number of buildings his father had already built.

His son Khajeh Nezam al-Din Masoud Kojajani continued working in the Levant until 1419 based on the ground already prepared by his father and grandfather. Representing Timur, he took political mission to the Sultan of Egypt and the rulers of the Levant (Al-Maqrizi, 1997, v.6, p.97). Applauding his administrative status, Ibn Arabshah introduces him as "popular personality in administrative system of Timur". But pointing to his mystical and administrative rank, he says Khajeh Masoud was Timur's spy in Damascus (Ibn Arabshah, 1991: p. 298). According to him, Khajeh Masoud played a key role in uniting the Turkmen of the Levant in favor of Timur and in preventing their cooperation with the rulers of Egypt. Khajeh Masoud stayed in the

Levant until his death (1419) and administered his father's endowed properties (Ibn Hojr Asqalani, 1986, v.5, p. 62-66). Perhaps it is the reason of his name's absence in the Persian sources.

Dolatshah Samarqandi (2003, p. 310) has introduced Khajeh Sheikh as "a real gnostic and learned mystical wayfarer", a source of imitation for the public and the elite, and someone the Sultans believed in him. His Khanqah was always crowded until the reign of Timur. His collection of poetry was quite famous in Iraq and Azerbaijan. In his book of poetry, Khajeh Sheikh has praised Sultan Uweis (Kojajani, 2016, pp. 30-67). According to researchers, he followed Hafez's style in poetry (Behnami, 2015, pp.78-82). He managed to gain the trust of this Sultan and even upon his death, he became the second "kingmaker" in the capital. Along with Qazi Sheikh Ali and upon the consensus of the courtiers, he was involved in the murder of Sheikh Hassan, the elder son of Sultan Uweis and installing minor king on the throne (Hafez Abru, 2001, v.1, p. 489). Khajeh Sheikh Kojajani's conspiratorial partnership continued for ten more years in the capacity of the chief judge, during which he managed to protect his family's position through orientation conforming to the political conditions. Therefore, Shah Shoja in an assembly in Tabriz evaluated him as a personality quite different from what he had already heard (Hafez Abru, 2001, v.1, p.489). Khajeh Sheikh's contradictory personality was a sort of instrument for him to protect himself in political and military crises. He later joined Sultan Ahmad of Jalayirid dynasty and during the civil war of this dynasty he invited him to Tabriz and enthroned him. He also mediated the relations between rebel emir Adel and Sultan Ahmad (Hafez Abru, 2001, v.1, p.506). Apparently, relations between him and Sultan Ahmad did not end well since the Sultan was well aware of his kingmaker power. According to Ibn Karbalayi, Sultan Ahmad was worried about his growing power; therefore, he murdered the Sheikh in Baghdad and had him buried near the tomb of Imam Musa Kazim (AS) (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.1, p.41). His murder in 1382, as cited by some researchers, is most probably incorrect. The colophon appearing at the end of his book of poetry suggests that he was alive in 1386 (Kojajani, 2016, p.208).

### **5. The Kojajani Family on the Path of Shift from Religious-centered to Viziership-centered Administrative Experience**

The death of Khajeh Sheikh did not overshadow the local and regional power of Kojajani Family in the temporary rule of Timurids on Azerbaijan. Rather, their behavior became more sophisticated due to intense political and military developments.

The position of the chief judge after the death of Khajeh Sheikh was not immediately delegated to his sons. The power was transferred from Khajeh Sheikh to another branch of Khajeh Ebrahim's sons, i.e., Moghis al-Din Khajeh Sheikh ul-Islam (Khajeh Sheikh's brother). He assumed the position of the chief judge of Tabriz in the period marking the death of Khajeh Sheikh and rising to power of Seyyedi Mohammad. The sources suggest that he was alive in 1408 and the Grand Master's biography was translated into Persian language in the same year at his order by Najm al-Din Taromi (Palasi Shirazi, 1947, p.7). As it was mentioned earlier, the similarity in the names and lack of sufficient information on family members have made it difficult to identify the quality of transfer of power and position from a branch to

another, creating ambiguities for accurate understanding of incidents and persons. It can be claimed to some degree that in Kojajani Family, the leadership and the position of the chief judge were used to be transferred to a senior member based on an unwritten law. This is how the transfer of power from one branch to another has created ambiguity in identifying their relations and performances. Upon the death of Moghis al-Din Khajeh, the position of the chief judge was transferred again to Khajeh Seyyedi Mohammad, son of Khajeh Sheikh. It is not clear what the prefix Seyyedi means. Is it part of the first name or not? Apparently, Ibn Karbalayi has extended the family's lineage to Imam Hussein and given them the title of Seyyed despite the lack of any claim on assuming the title of Seyyed by the dynasty until early 16th century and most importantly, the absence of such claim or attribution in Grand Master's biography and in Khajeh Sheikh's book of poetry (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.1,p.38). A descendant of this family living in the 18th century as introduced himself as Mohammad Amir Hashem Hosseini Kojaji. Apparently, the title of Seyyed has been firstly used in the family after Seyyedi Mohammad and publicized in the Safavid period due to the lofty position of Seyyeds or the direct descendants of the Prophet (PBUH). Another point concerning the title of Seyyed is the use of the title of "Amir" before the first name of some Kojaji Family members during their viziership. The word was gradually shortened to "Mir" which came to be a sign of attachment to the lineage of the Prophet (PBUH) in Azerbaijan in late periods. The title of Seyyed could attach them to the Shia school of jurisprudence. Their mystical reputation facilitated their shift from Sunni to Shia school of jurisprudence. During Timurid and Turkoman reigns, due to weak boundaries of descent and religion, it was not difficult to shift from one sect of religion to another.

After the death of Moghis al-Din Khajeh, his nephews Khajeh Shams al-Din Seyyedi Mohammad and Khajeh Nezam al-Din Masoud regained their father's position but they failed to revive the glory of his time. As mentioned before, Khajeh Masoud was Timur's envoy in Egypt and the Levant, when the position of the chief judge of Tabriz was assumed by Khajeh Seyyedi Mohammad. Unlike his brother, he supported the newly established rule of Qara Qoyunlu dynasty. As the chief judge of Tabriz, he tempted Qara Yusef to invade Azerbaijan to cut off the hands of Miranshah and Abu Bakr Mirza (Rumlu, 2010, v.2, p.146). His loyalty to Qara Qoyunlu ruler, like other local families, was a function of political expediency. He often supported the winning and powerful sides. Therefore, in 1306, during the conflict between Jagirlu and Shirvanshah forces to occupy Tabriz, he sided with Shirvanshah (Hafez Abru, 1993, v.1, p.166-167). After some time, when Sultan Ahmad of the Jalayirid dynasty was approaching Tabriz, he gathered dignitaries of the city in support of the Sultan. After the defeat and the killing of the Sultan, Qara Yusef forgave his mistake in supporting Sultan Ahmad in 1410 due to his father's generosity, and behaved him well. (Valeh Esfahani Qazvini, 2000, p.683). Khajeh Seyyedi Mohammad was again involved in the death of Qara Yusef and his burial, something that guaranteed continuation of the family's political influence during Turkoman period (Hafez Abru, 1993, v.2, p.735).

There is no clear information on political and religious activities of Kojaji Family between the years 1420-1455, but the period marks the re-transfer of power to Khajeh Ebrahim's branch, i.e. from Ghias al-Din Khajeh's sons to Moghis al-Din Sheikh ul-Islam's sons. The transfer did not solely include the position of the chief judge of Tabriz; rather, it was a big change of administrative tendencies and interests in Moghis al-Din's branch from the position of a chief judge as a religious institution to viziership. This metamorphosis is associated with fixation of the leadership of Kojaji Khanqah in the branch of Khajeh Haji's sons.

The gnostic power of Kojajani Family was revived to some degree by Khajeh Ali bin Ghias al-Din Khajeh Sheikh Mohammad bin Khajeh Osman bin Khajeh Mohammad bin Khajeh Haji. During his leadership, a few cultural and scientific personalities came under gnostic influence. Khajeh Haji's spiritual journeys and his gnostic inspired Jahanshah's wife in her dreams about building Muzaffariyeh estate. It was after this inspiration that she became one of his followers (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.2, p43).

With the Kojajani Family's rising to power in theosophical aspect based on the theoretical theosophy of their Grand Master, there appeared to be a sort of implicit competition between Kojajani and Sheikh Safi Khanqahs, since followers of either Sufi order have tried to downplay the other. Ibn Bazzaz's *Safwat al-Safa* has recorded instances of such competitions. Finally, the story of rivalry ends with the victory of the Sufi order of Sheikh Safi who, received help from metaphysical forces (Ibn Bazzaz, 1994, pp.67, 838-839, 1179-1178). In addition to Safavid Sufi order, the Kojaji Family was involved in ideological rivalry with Sufi order of Laleh Family in Tabriz (Mashkurian & Ja'fari, 2015, pp. 247-272). Ibn Karbalayi's account clearly indicates that neither the Kojajani nor the Lalavi (attributed to Laleh Family) family was Seyyed or a direct descendant of the Prophet (PBUH) (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.2, p151). Ibn Karbalayi has pictured a sort of competition between the titles of "Khajeh" and "Seyyed". Both these accounts, however, must be treated skeptically since Ibn Bazzaz was a disciple of Safavid Sufi order and Ibn Karbalayi was a follower of Laleh Sufism.

The sanctity and the theosophical morale in the Grand Master were diminished because of his marriage with a younger woman in the final years of the Sheikh's life (Ibn Karbalayi, 2004, v.2, p43).

## **6. The Kojajani Family's Viziership in the Reign of Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu Monarchies**

Amir Khajeh Ala al-din Seddiq was the first member of Kojajani Family who assumed the position of the viziership in Jahanshah's reign To consolidate power, (after the death of Shahrokh) he ousted all officials and forces loyal to the Timurid dynasty and replaced them with forces faithful to him. The Kojajani Family was on the list of appointees since they had less relations with Timurids and more affinity with Qara Qoyunlu dynasty. Therefore, most probably Khajeh Ala al-Din Seddiq and Khajeh Salimi's appointments took place in 1451/855, when Jahanshah led his army to invade Persian Iraq (Eraq-e Ajam), Khorasan and southern regions of Iran. (Tehrani, 1977, p.258) In his military expedition to Astarabad and Firuzkuh, Jahanshah ousted and jailed two viziers. Khajeh Seddiq was incarcerated in a prison on Bohira Island

of Azerbaijan for the reason no one knows even today. Perhaps Khajeh Seddiq had failed to manifest his full capacity in viziership or he might have been involved in a plot with Hassanali Mirza, the rebellious son of Jahanshah, against the king. There is no information at hand on his freedom or reinstatement in the administration of Jahanshah but a few accounts suggest that Jahanshah did not trust Khajeh Seddiq. The sources state that it was after the rebellion of Eskandar Mirza's daughters in Tabriz and the murder of Jahanshah, Khajeh Seddiq assumed the position of vizierate in the new government of Eskandar Mirza's daughters (Tehrani, 1977, p.435). His cooperation with rebel forces indicates Kojaji's discontent with Jahanshah's monarchy. Upon the release of Hassanali Mirza from Maku prison and his claim to take the throne of Tabriz, Amir Nezam al-Din Seyyed Ashur and Amir Ala al-Din Seddiq along with Amir Majd al-Din Shirazi assumed the position of vizier (1468 /873). There is no news on Khajeh Seddiq Kojaji's fate after the killing of Hassanali Mirza.

The Kojajani Family failed to grasp power in the reigns of Sultan Hassan Beik and Sultan Ya'qub because of their loyalty to Qara Qoyunlu kings. Both branches of the Kojajani Family, i.e. Khanqahi (religious) and Divani (administrative), were marginalized, during the rise of the Safavid.. The two Sufi orders were archrivals for years. The increase in the administrative power of the Kojajani Family and marginalization of Sheikh Junayd's branch of Safavid order is also notable, although it cannot be supported by sufficient data.

Amir Shams al-Din Zakaria, son of Amir Ala al-Din Seddiq, was the last member of Kojajani Family who assumed the position of vizier in the rule of Aq Qoyunlu. During the struggle for power after the death of Sultan Ya'qub, Amir Shams al-Din detached himself from the branch of Ya'qub's sons and showed signs of loyalty to Rostam Mirza's monarchy. Since the majority of administrative positions had been occupied for the last two decades and there was no vacant position for a newcomer, according to Safavid sources, Amir Zakaria "devoted his life and served like a soldier" to bring Rostam Mirza to power (Monshi Qazvini, 1999: p. 92). In this period, Amir Zakaria revived the family tradition of "kingmaker" and assumed the position of vizier himself. He played a key role in land reforms and cession of feudal lands to individuals (1491/897). His honesty in serving the people has been reflected in poetry (Monshi Qazvini, 1999, p.93). Later, Amir Zakaria along with Malek Mahmoud Deylami assumed the position of vizierate in Alvand Mirza's administration. There are clues suggesting that he assumed the administrative affairs while Deylami undertook the financial affairs of the first minister's position (1500 /906). According to historical reports, Kojaji's adversaries accused him of financial corruption for as much as 200 tumans. Malek Mahmoud cut the sum to 100 tumans but Amir Zakaria could only collect 50 tumans in repayment. Amidst the scandal, the news of the rise of Shah Ismail circulated in the country. Amir Zakaria once again played the role of "kingmaker" family and joined Shah Ismail, titling him the "Key to Azerbaijan" (Shirazi, 1990: p. 49; Navayi, 1971: p. 3).

### **7. The Decline of the Administrative Position of the Kojajani Family during the Safavid Reign, from the Viziership of Sultan to the Viziership of Emirs**

Amir Zakaria managed to stabilize his family's status in the new government and new order by political expediency and opportunism. They had probably resorted to their title of Seyyed as direct descendants of the Prophet (PBUH) in addition to political measures to stay in power, so that around 70 years later, Ibn Karbalayi found access to the letter of attribution of the title of Seyyed for this family and mentioned it in his book. The two measures were both vital for coordination with Shia hegemony. Their history of theosophy and the position of the chief judge eased their coordination with the new system of Shia rule. Until 1510 /916, Amir Zakaria shared the position of viziership with a few other officials (Amini Heravi, 2004, p.359). Since then, however, there is no sign or sound of him and his sons in historical accounts but his nephews (like Jalal al-Din Amir Beik Mohrdar and Amir Ghias al-Din, both sons of Khajeh Ebrahim, son of Amir Ala al-Din Seddiq) assumed administrative positions throughout the Safavid reign (Monshi Qazvini, 1999, p.185).

It was because of Amir Zakaria's services that the family members remained in power but a few important issues imposed fundamental changes over the sustainability of power. Several reasons caused the decline of the family's power: The transfer of capital (i.e. power) from Tabriz to Qazvin and then Isfahan, and the dramatic fall of the religious influence (Khanqah branch) and Sufi order of the Kojajani Family in late 15 /9th century, the family members' distance from their origin in Tabriz, mistakes made by political personalities of the family, and opportunism of their adversaries.

Jalal al-Din (aka Jamal al-Din) Amir Beik, the third vizier from the Kojajani Family, was born in Natanz. Relying upon family's administrative experience, financial power and political influence, he studied special sciences, particularly the Siyaq accounting system that was welcomed by Shah Tahmasb (Navayi, 1971, p.3-6). Thanks to his art of eloquence, good performance in assemblies, and skill in poetry recitation, Jalal al-Din progressed in the steps of Safavid administrative hierarchy very soon (Sammirza, 2005, p.92). Due to his skill in Siyaq accounting system, he was appointed as the official in charge of the general book of accounting (general ledger in modern terms) of the country (Navayi, 1971, p.3-6). Primarily, he served under Qazi Beik, an army commander of Shah Tahmasb, and Atabak (Laleh) Bahram Mirza. After treason by Qazi Beik that cost him losing his position, Jalal al-Din was promoted to the position of first minister along with Ghias al-Din Ali, who managed the cabinet of ministers. It was the highest administrative position Kojajani Family members had ever occupied during Safavid reign that was gained after the death of Amir Zakaria. His tenure, though, did not last long since, he was ousted and jailed in Qahqahe prison in 1547/954. After some time, he was released and forced to settle in Kerman. Receiving help from family friends, he could gain administrative positions again, such as the viziership of Amir Sultan Rumlu, the custodian of Astan Quds Razavi, the body in charge of Imam Reza (AS) holy shrine in Mashhad, and the general minister of Khorasan state. He was, however, ousted from all positions one after another "due to some discourteous behavior" in 1551 /958. Adversaries had apparently accused him of "witchcraft to control stars, especially the Sun which

belongs to the sultans only,” (Rumlu, 2010, v.2: pp. 1347-1348). but the real reasons behind his ousting were financial corruption as well as his subject’s oppression and overcharging taxes from people for personal gains. Fortunately, two letters are at hand that remove any misunderstanding in this regard. In one of the letters, Shah Tahmasb has accused him of overcharging taxes from the time of Qazi Beik until assuming positions and burying the money, conditioning his freedom to returning the buried money to the state treasury (Navayi, 1971, p.8-12). In response to these accusations, Amir Beik wrote a letter to the king in Safar (the second month of the lunar based Islamic calendar) 1567 /975 exonerating himself from all the charges brought against him, announcing that he has no golden coin to bury. His adversaries had accused him of accumulating wealth to probably flee and join the Sunni Uzbek government. His poetical contest with Ubeydullah Khan of the Uzbek monarchy during his viziership in Khorasan had provoked such accusation (Navayi, 1971, p.3-6). Citing his family’s 300 years of service to the Safavid dynasty, he denounced the accusation and said “being among the damned Sunnis” is synonymous with deprivation from salvation in this world and the world after (Navayi, 1971, p. 8). At any rate, Amir Beik was alive from 1551-1572/958 - 980, when Hassan Beik Rumlu was authoring his *Ahsan al-Tawarikh*, and was serving his term in Alamut prison. Shah Tahmasb’s extraordinary verdict in his detention for over 20 years, indicates that the charges against him were serious. There was also an accusation of national security violation, though it has not been mentioned in his letter. Perhaps the king had learnt a lesson from Qazi Beik’s treason and jailed him on such charges.

Khajeh Ghias al-Din Mohammad was another member of the family who had apparently less successes compared to his brother, since he served in less significant administrative positions under princes, secretaries and military commanders in Iraq. Like his brother, Ghias al-Din was skilled in poetry (Sammirza, 2005, p.93).

The 17 /11th century sources make mention of another son of Amir Beik named Amir Mohammad Hashem bin Khajeh Amir Beik Kojaji Hosseini as the scribe of the book of *Kholasat al Hesab* (The Summa of Calculation) by Sheikh Baha al-Din Mohammad bin Hossein Ameli into Arabic. The book was written in 1681/1092 in Ebrahimiyyeh School of Tabriz.

### Conclusion

The Sufi family of Kojajani emerged in Tabriz amidst religious identity crisis prevailing the Iranian society, but underwent some changes under the impact of fundamental changes in the society. As time passed on, the events left more impacts on the family. In the course of its Sufi practices, the family failed to exert serious influence on the Sufi trend in the society, failing to create a Sufi order in the arena of Sufism or even create and lead certain social and religious movements. However, the family continued to live for several centuries by the side of some trends with lower degrees of influence. Although the family rose to power due to the influence and sanctity of Sufism, it owed the continuation of its presence to non-Sufi religious positions such as the position of the chief judge, and later the position of the vizier. In other words, since the time of Khajeh Bozorg or the Grand Master, the family members were identified as religious figures rather than Sufi personalities. Their behaviors and

actions bear testimony to this change. The position of the chief judgeship served as a launching pad to ministerial position. Upon the arrival of the Turkoman rulers in Azerbaijan, the family's religious activities gradually grew weaker. Their mystical activities continued in a branch distinct from their administrative activities, and, finally lost its vigor in late 14/9th century, which caused their failure to support the administrative branch of the family. In addition to the intra-family developments, some political expediencies and mistakes deprived them of power in certain periods. However, whenever a crisis befell the country, they were in a better position to gain power. Except for the stable reign of Sultan Uweis, the Kojajani Family owed its power regain to political instability until the 16/11th century. The family failed to gain access to sustainable power or positions during the stable reigns of Jahanshah, Hassanshah and Sultan Ya'qub. From the late Aq Qoyunlu period until stabilization of power under Shah Ismail, the family returned to power again. Even after the transfer of power from Shah Ismail to Shah Tahmasb and the ensuing political instability, the family retained its power. Upon the stabilization of power under Shah Tahmasb, which marked prosperity in the society, the name of the family disappeared again from the political scene under the Safavid authority. It seems that the majority of Kojajani family members were men of the period of instability than that of stability. At any rate, the Kojajani family began with Sufism, paid serious attention to mundane activities under the mystical teachings of the grand sheikh of the family, perpetuated their sustainable presence in Iranian society through winning administrative positions and gradually returned to an aristocratic and noble position through cultural approach since mid-6 CE/10th century.

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