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Shiism With Popular Narratives in Safavid Iran

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Abstract

Shah Ismail, who founded the Safavid State, had a khutba read in the name of the Twelve Imams and declared Shiism as the official sect. Ismail accomplished what his predecessors failed to do: he united Iran politically and accepted Shiism as the official sect. The Safavids took steps by the official sect and started to spend all their power and authority in this direction. The Safavids started to apply various methods such as vilifying their rivals, putting psychological pressure on them or eliminating them completely and strengthened their state authority. With the official declaration of Shiism, the practice of religious worship centred on Ahl-e Beyt and the production of various works that would ensure the spread of Shiism was ensured. These activities were carried out under the spiritual patronage of the Shahs. The protection of Shiism in Iran against the attempts of the Ottomans and Uzbeks to establish dominance shaped the perceptions of religiosity of the Safavid shahs. It can be said that works in the epic genre, which have been read among the people since the reign of Shah Ismail, have an important place in the spread of Shiism. This study will focus on the contribution of the epics Hamze-nama and Abu-Moslem-nama to Shiism.

Keywords: Shiism, Safavids, Iran, Popular Culture, Ahl-e Beyt.

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Safevi İnan'nda Popüler Anlatılarla Şiilik

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Öz

Safevi Devleti'ni kuran Şah İsmail, On İki İmam adına hutbe okuttu ve Şiiliği resmi mezhep olarak ilan etti. İsmail, seleflerinin başaramadığını başararak İnan'ı siyasi olarak birleştirmiş ve Şiiliği resmi mezhep olarak kabul etmişti. Safeviler resmi mezhebe uygun adımlar atarak tüm güç ve yetkilerini bu yönde harcamaya başladılar. Safeviler rakiplerini kötölemek, onlara psikolojik baskı uygulamak ya da tamamen ortadan kaldırmak gibi çeşitli yöntemler uygulamaya başlamış ve devlet otoritesini güçlendirdi. Şiiliğin resmen ilan edilmesiyle birlikte Ehl-i beyt merkezli dini ibadetlerin uygulanması ve Şiiliğin yayılmasını sağlayacak çeşitli eserlerin üretilmesi sağlandı. Bu faaliyetler şahların manevi himayesi altında yürütülmüştür. İnan'da Osmanlıların ve Özbeklerin hâkimiyet kurma girişimlerine karşı Şiiliğin korunması, Safevi şahlarının dindarlık algılarını şekillendirmiştir. Şah İsmail döneminden itibaren halk arasında okunan destan türündeki eserlerin Şiiliğin yayılmasında önemli bir yere sahip olduğu söylenebilir. Popüler kültürü nasıl şekillendiği anlamak için destan türündeki eserlerde inanç unsurlarının çözümlenmesine odaklanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada Hamza-nâme, Ebumüslimnâme destanlarının Şiiliğe katkısı üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şiilik, Safeviler, İnan, Popüler Kültür, Ehl-i Beyt.

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1. Introduction

Caught between the power struggles among the Akkoyunlu princes, Ismail and his brothers hid in the Rumlu neighbourhood of Ardabil with the help of the disciples of the Ardabil tekke. Ismail was six years old at this time. The Akkoyunlu had mobilised to capture the sons of Sheikh Haydar. Lala Hüseyin Beğ of Damascus, Dede Abdal Bey of Dulkadir and Gök Ali, a disciple from Anatolia, kidnapped the sheikh's sons to Gilan in 1493. Ismail stayed in Gilan for more than six years. At this time, the number of followers of the Sheikh Safiy al-Dīn Ardabilī tekke, who came from Anatolia and Azerbaijan and gathered around Ismail, was gradually increasing. While the struggle for the throne of Akkoyunlu was going on, Iba Sultan raised Elvend, the son of Yusuf Bey, one of the grandsons of Uzun Hasan, to the throne of Akkoyunlu in Tabriz in 1498. While these struggles were going on, Ismail, who was 12 years old, came to Tarum from the Deylem region due to the favourable political situation. From there, Ismail travelled to Anatolia, where the disciples of the Ardabil tekke were located, and when he arrived in Erzincan, Ustacalu, Shamlu, Rumlu, Tekelü, Dulkadir and Varsak Turkmans from various parts of Anatolia joined him in masses. He headed towards Shirvan with his seven thousand followers. When Shirvan Shah Feruh Yasar heard that Ismail was marching on Shirvan with his followers, he retreated to defend. He defeated the Shirvan army in the battle fought in a place called Jabani near Gulistan castle (Savory, 1965, p. 71-72).

How the political success of Shiism was realised with the rise of the Safavids to power has been discussed in various studies. However, it is obvious that religious and cultural transformation began with the Safavids' rise to power in Iran. All the policies of the Safavids, in which the Qizilbash were the leading actors, in the name of statehood had to be radical and permanent and the transformation had to be in accordance with the normative understanding of Islam. The most appropriate tool for this transformation would be the preservation of the pre-Safavid written cultural heritage of Shiism and its transfer to the new society. Safavid religious and political elites considered it necessary to utilise this cultural heritage for the transformation they wished to bring about. This process involved the production of new works and the edition or commentary of the sources used (Caferiyan, 2003). However, the works of the Arab scholars who came to

Iran at the invitation of Shah Ismail represent only one aspect of Safavid Shiism. As Brunner puts it, ‘it was through the realisation of a much more monumental cultural process’ that ‘Shiism became firmly rooted in the Iranian population’(Brunner, 2005, p. 319-321). Apart from the Ulama texts, the question of how popular culture formed and transformed and what methods were developed to establish Shiism culturally is essential for understanding the religious culture in Safavid Iran. Since they were written from a specific ideological perspective, like the Ulama texts, they can provide misleading information about how Safavid society was shaped. Therefore, focusing on popular epics, known as heroic narratives, in the development and spread of Shiism will provide a better understanding of popular culture. This study will focus on the people’s religious values through the epics *Hamze-nama* and *Abu-Moslem-nama*, which were read in Safavid Iran. According to Moazzen, Safavid-era Shiism constructed itself as a ‘community of learning and remembering’. This reconstruction and preservation of Shiism’s religious identity can be achieved through rhetorical means (Moazzen, 2018, p. 97).

Although it is controversial where storytellers are fed from, it can be said that they contain important information about folk culture. It can be said that the texts used by storytellers or the stories they recite by heart effectively shape folk culture, even for propaganda purposes. However, the information we have does not show us exactly what the storyteller aims. It can only give an idea about feelings and thoughts. The reliability of the texts compiled from the narratives of the storytellers, of which different versions have emerged over time, is also questionable. The pressure of the clergy on popular epics does not indicate whether there was any interference with the content of these texts. It is also not known whether any approval from the clergy was obtained before the narration of such texts, which were read to different classes of people. For example, how was the transformation of the *Abu-Moslem-nama* intervened? Did only the storyteller add his own feelings and thoughts. Whether he shaped his narrative according to the cultural universe he was addressing is not fully answered. It is also a matter of debate whether the change and transformation of Safavid society proceeded in parallel with these texts, but we can say that the narratives of the storytellers contributed to the beginning of a transformation in Safavid Iran in favour of the ruling elite. In this direction, it should be more important to focus on the cultural environment created rather than

the extent to which the public believed or internalised the words of the narrators.

2. Popular Narratives in Safavid Iran

From the twelfth century onwards, stories in the Persian epic genre were read by travelling narrators in Iran and spread among the people (Afshari, 2021, p. 420). Sometimes accompanied by music, these narrators told the stories of important figures with epic lifestyles. Popular stories such as Firdavsi's *Shah-name* and *Eskandar-name* were read and listened to by both the ruling classes and the common people (Marzolph, 2010, p. 215). The Islamic epic story, which emerged as part of traditional culture, develops as a continuation of the Iranian epic story tradition. This genre of literature is used as a counterpart to the so-called 'folk epic'. The stories of heroes with extraordinary life stories, who were helped by angels and similar powers, who were fearless hunters, were read among the people (Tor, 2011, p. 115). Until the Safavid rule, epics such as *Darab-name*, *Firuzshah-name*, *Samak-ayyar*, and *Hamze-name* were popular among Persian speakers (Hanaway, 1991, p. 55-57). In organising the practices of religious life, the Safavids attributed important functions to storytellers called *naqqal* (Afshari, 2021, p. 419). In addition, Iranian heroic epics such as *Shah-name* and *Eskandar-name* were recited by storytellers such as *naqqal*. The rulers of the states that ruled in Iran also supported the oral narrative tradition. Some rulers had their own personal storytellers. Despite the patronising attitude of the rulers, the legends of ancient Iranian heroes such as Rostam, Zal, and Isfendiyar, read by clerical storytellers, were condemned as belonging to the pagan period (Yamamoto, 2010, p. 240-244). It is known that Shah Ismail commissioned a group of seventeen dervishes to spread Shiism, and that these dervishes changed their narratives according to the audience, especially reciting the battles of Ali for warrior groups. These epics were read to people belonging to the ruling class or military aristocracy, as well as to ordinary people in public spaces such as coffee houses and *masjids*. The fact that the narrators shaped their narratives according to the situation of the listeners showed that they did not act according to a specific text or that they could reproduce an unchanging text if they had one. In the 17th century, a dervish named Hoseyn Sabuhi was a reader of *Hamze-name* as well as a reader of *Shah-name* (Yamamoto, 2010, p. 245).

Hagen also states that religious heroic narratives are part of popular culture in the sense that they reach the public. This situation seems to prove that the breadth of the spread of oral culture is directly proportional to its popularity (Hagen, 2009, p. 351). Popular stories appealed to the emotions of the public and had a wide audience. The stories were interwoven with narratives in which heroes ran from adventure to adventure, had extraordinary powers, and fought against giants and fairies (Marzolph, 1999, p. 281). It is important to consider whether a popular epic gains this popularity because of what qualities it possesses or whether the content is shaped according to the attitude of the epic narrator. This situation leads to the conclusion that a behaviour is shown according to the official belief and ideology. As epics were shaped according to the feelings of the people, in most cases, they were made to gain popularity consciously. Such works could be produced directly for the ruler, prince or a local ruler, or they could be read and listened to directly in open spaces for the public (Karamustafa, 2015, p. 349-364).

The epics were not read for a specific group of people; there were storytellers for different groups of people. These epics were read to people belonging to the ruling class or military aristocracy, as well as to ordinary people in public spaces such as coffee houses and masjids. The fact that the storytellers shaped their narratives according to the situation of the listeners showed that they did not act according to a specific text, or if they had a fixed text, they could reproduce it (Yamamoto, 2010, p. 245). The common point of the stories is that their heroes have extraordinary powers and are helped by prophets or Gabriel. In addition to heroic epics, narrators also used stories with religious content in the shaping of folk culture. The rulers, who strictly controlled the spread of the official faith, relied on the narratives of these storytellers. The result was that high culture could easily manipulate popular culture. In the Safavids, storytellers reworked classical works such as the *Shah-name* and *Eskandar-name*, interpreting and evaluating them for their audiences. For this reason, storytellers, commonly referred to as *naqqal*, had an important social function, as well as an important role in promoting and reinforcing popular ideologies and beliefs. Islamic heroic epics became famous as a part of popular literature during the Safavid period, and thus, there was an increase in Persian epic literature. The legendary and historical personalities of the heroes in these epics were determined according to the needs of Shiism, the official sect.

In some cases, the stories of Islamic heroes were combined with those of ancient Iranian heroes. Although it is unclear to what extent the court elite supported these works, their influence on the development of Shiism in Safavid Iran is evident. However, the Shii ulema's attitude towards popular religious literature was harsh (Newman, 2020, p. 70-74).

It is known that with the establishment of the Safavids, a group called Tabarra'iyyans used to read aloud in the streets, mosques and all public places insulting the first three caliphs and asking the people to join them (Johnson, 2004, p. 56-64). It is known that during the foundation years of the Safavids, during the reign of Shah Ismail, there was a group that cursed the first three caliphs. Tabarra'iyyans was organised for the first time during the Tahmasb period. With threats and intimidation, the Tabarra'iyyans would go among the people and recite curses against the Companions and loudly praise Ali and the twelve Imams (Parsadust, 1391, p. 81). Traditional Iranian storytelling continued until the Safavids came to power in Iran. During this period, pre-Islamic Iranian heroic narratives were transformed from the early Islamic period and began to be intertwined with the stories of Islamic warriors. The most important of the heroes whose epic stories are told is Ali. Ali fights against the infidels. Possessing extraordinary powers, Ali's battles are full of miracles. Calmard argues that the Shiite ulema in Safavid Iran were less circumspect in their epics about Ali (Calmard, 2003, p. 325).

Undoubtedly, the number of works written about Ali increased in Safavid Iran. The role of Ali and other members of the *Ahl-e Beyt* in products such as miniatures and epics produced during the Safavid period is an undeniable fact. Since the early years of the Safavids, the understanding of piety has led to the writing of various works about Ali. *Hamle-i Haydari*, a work describing the battles and miracles of Ali, was compiled by Molla Farig Gilani and dedicated to Shah Abbas (Halili, 1392, p. 154-155). In addition to Gilani's compilation, another *Hamle-i Haydari* was compiled by Mirza Muhammad Rafi Ibn Mohammad Mashadi Bazil and completed by Abu Talib Isfahani (Safa, 1365, p. 235). The 'Amir Hamza Epic', which tells about the heroism of Hamza, who is considered the first hero and the first martyr of Islam, had an important place in the stories of meddahs in Safavid Iran (Calmard, 2003, p. 326). Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet Mohammad, was the protector of the Prophet Mohammad

in the early periods of the religion of Islam and played an important role in the difficult periods of the Islamic religion. The Persian version of the adventures and battles of Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet Mohammad, has spread. Although the Hamza epic is a classical heroic epic, there are religious elements, the adventures of the ancient Iranian hero Rostam, and similarities with Siyavush. Hamze-nama, published by Ja'far She'ar, was used in our study (She'ar, 1968).

The story of Hamza b. Abd-al-Motalleb, whose versions appeared in various languages after the spread of Islam, spread from Anatolia to India. It is estimated that Hamze-name is a combination of the stories of Hamza b. Abdulmutalib, the hero of Hamze-name, and Hamza b. Abdullah (d.181/797-98), an outsider from the east of Iran. Accordingly, the story of Hamza b. Abdullah became popular with the work published as 'Dasitan-ı Amir Hamza Sahibkiran'. It is known that one of the copies of the epic produced in Iran belonged to Jalal-i Belhi, and another copy belonged to Shah Nasir al-Din Mohammad Abu'l Meali. A copy dated 1073 (1662) bears the name *Sahibkiranname* (Albayrak, 1997, p. 516). Hamza fights with giants and fairies. Hamza kills his enemies with a shout, like Gershasb in Shahnameh. The parables of the prophets, such as Moses splitting the sea with his staff, are similar. The narrator, who brings Ibrahim and Hamza together, explains that Hamza belongs to the *Hanif* religion of Ibrahim, that he invites his enemies to the true religion, the belief in one God, and that idol worship is false. In some places, Hamza even prays. These narratives show that since Hamza was the uncle of the Prophet, an attempt was made to justify his pre-Islamic past. The other uncles of the Prophet, such as Abbas and Abi Talib, who are important figures for the Shiites in Hamze-name, are the other uncles of the Prophet Muhammad, but they lag behind Hamza (She'ar, 1968, p. 4). The reason why the story 'Qesse-ye Hamze', the epic of the Iranian rebel Hamza b. Abdullah, who rebelled against the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid, became popular as Hamze-name during the Safavid period and was associated with Hamza, maybe because Hamza b. Abdullah was a rebel who rebelled against the Abbasid caliphate. Hanaway argues that this change in the Hamza saga should be sought in the changing social and religious conditions of the Safavids and that storytellers added new religious elements to the old romances in order to propagate Shiism (Hanaway, 1970, p. 11). Marzolph claims that the connection of the Hamza story with a historical story is vague (Marzolph,

2010, p. 215). Hamze-name is a popular story that was read in Iran until the twentieth century, along with epics such as Firdavsi's Shah-nama, Eskandar-nama, Qesse-ye Hoseyn-e Kord-e Shabestari, etc (Yamamoto, 2022, p.359).

Another work that had an impact on the formation of Safavid Shiism was the Abu-Moslem-nama. Until the 17th century, when the Shiite ulema began to gain power, Abu-Moslem was one of the popular texts and one of the stories that people listened to with pleasure. The assassination of Abu-Moslem, a key figure in the Abbasid revolution, led to his heroisation by many. In particular, movements with messianic claims symbolised Abu-Moslem. Although the Shiite ulema condemned and cursed Abu-Moslem for his role in the Abbasid revolution, he remained a folk hero for a long time. Abu-Moslem-nama and the Abu-Moslem cult, which the Safavids used skillfully during the statehood process, began to fall out of favour after the establishment of the state. Sufi groups that contradicted Shah Ismail's Mahdi thoughts have been put under pressure since the foundation years of the state. Shah Ismail destroyed the tombs of Sufi sect leaders, as well as the tomb of Abu-Moslem in Nishapur, who was the initiator of the rebellion that established the Abbasids. This harsh attitude towards Abu-Moslem was continued after Shah Ismail and became a state policy. The efforts of the official religious authorities were effective in banning the Abu-Moslem-nama, which were widely read among the people. As a result of the influence of Karaki, who became the head of the religious authority in Iran, Abu-Moslem-nama began to be officially banned. The main reason for this situation was the role of Abu-Moslem in establishing the Abbasids. By order of Karaki, such epics were banned. Babayan says that these prohibitions initiated by Karaki against Abu-Moslem were the beginning of the *Imami ulama's* attempts to suppress the Qizilbash beliefs openly (Babayan, 1994, p. 144-146). Calmard points out that from the 17th century onwards, when the refutations against Sufism and the Abu-Moslem-nama were written, the popularity of the Abu-Moslem-nama declined among the people, and on the contrary, the epic genre called Mukhtarnama spread, and Mukhtar was seen as a 'good Shiite' in this period. This situation shows us interesting results in terms of the religious, social and political context of the period (Calmard, 2003, p. 322-223). If we go back to Abu-Moslem-nama, various versions of the heroic epic known as Abu-Moslem-nama spread in Turkish and Persian. The first information about the epic is found

in Ibn al-Nadim's fihrist. It is mentioned that the epic, known as Akhbar-ı Abu-Moslem, is one hundred *varağ* (page) (Ibn al-Nadim, 2010, p. 215). The text of Abu-Moslem-nama, which we used in this study, was published by Hoseyn Esmā'ili (Tarsusi, 2001).

3. Hamza, the Prophet of the True Religion (Hanif)

One of the common motifs of epics is the story of the hero's birth. The protagonist, usually from a noble background, is born with a distinctive sign or in an extraordinary way. Hamza emerges as the heir to his ancestors, the prophets Isaac and Abraham, and is described as an essential warrior who will help the last prophet, Mohammad. In the story of his birth, he was born with the blessing of his father Abd-al-Motalleb, the protector of Mecca. The tale of Hamza is born with a birthmark blessed by Allah through the prayers of the Prophet's grandfather Abd-al-Motalleb, the guardian of the Kaaba, which is considered sacred by Muslims. According to the epic, Hamza was born during the reign of the Sassanid ruler Nushirevan. When Nushirevan was told about a newborn child, he sent one of his viziers to kill him, but when the vizier who went to kill Hamza realised that he was a descendant of the Prophet, he gave up killing him. The story of Hamza's father Abd-al-Motalleb praying for the protection of Mecca and the subsequent birth of Hamza, which is told in the first parts of Hamze-nama, is essential information about the religious character of the epic. The first features that come to mind are the story of Hamza's extraordinary birth and the noble background linked to the Abrahamic prophetic tradition. The tale of Hamza's birth gives essential clues about how the epic will continue: "It is narrated that there was one of the sons of the Prophet Ismail in Mecca, and they called him Abd-al-Motalleb. He was a clean, hospitable man who loved his people and protected the strangers. He had twelve sons. He was the guardian of the Kaaba. When the infidels attacked the Kaaba, Khoja Abd-al-Motalleb was very upset. he came before Allah, groaned and prayed as follows: 'O Allah, give me such a son that he may destroy the infidels'. Then it was heard that 'Abd-al-Motalleb would have a child. Bozorgmir, the vizier of Kubad Shahriyar, came to the Arab land and killed the child. Then Abd-al-Motalleb and other notables of the city went to meet Bozorgmir. When Bozorgmir saw Abd-al-Motalleb, he dismounted from his horse and approached him in

friendship. He gently said to him, 'Don't bother, I won't hurt anyone.' So they entered the city. They welcomed Bozorgmir and introduced him to the dignitaries of Mecca. He also gave gifts to the chiefs. After a little while, Abd-al-Motalleb had a son. Abd-al-Motalleb took the child and brought him to Bozorgmir. When Bozorgmir looked at his face, he saw a green mark between his two eyebrows, kissed it and said: "This mark is a sign from prophet Abraham. Let the name of this child be Hamza. This child will be a helper of the religion of Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and will rule over seven countries and will take tribute from all the shahs and will tie rings on their cradles" (She'ar, 1968, p. 25).

The character of *Ayyar* is also an important figure in Hamzanama. In Persian stories, the ayyar is the assistant of the main protagonist who appears in various characters such as bandit, generous, pious, thief. In fact, the behaviours that the hero of the epic cannot do or that the narrator of the epic does not believe the hero to be worthy of, are done by Ayyar. Ayyar appears in epic literature as a deceitful, cunning type. In some cases, Ayyar himself turns into the main hero of the epic. They mislead the enemy by changing their clothes frequently. They become the closest servants of epic heroes (Afshari, 2021, p. 387). Amr Umayya Zamri, who is Hamza's most important assistant in Hamze-nama, is the character of Ayyar, who is frequently encountered in epics. Amr constantly guides Hamza with his tricks and cunning. In Hamze-nama. Bozorgmihir also sees the boy who will be Hamza's helper and recognises him immediately. When Bozorgmir, who recognises Amr and pays homage to him, is asked why, Bozorgmir says that this boy will be the protector of the religion of Prophet Mohammad and Hamza's helper. He gave the boy, whose name was Amr Umayya, a camel load of gold (She'ar, 1968, p. 25-26).

The *Hanif* faith of Abraham, the pre-Islamic true religion, is clearly visible in the story of Hamza. In this respect, it is one of the most important sources for understanding the popular Shiism of the Safavids. The story of Hamza provides an understanding of the religious identity of Safavid Iran. The mention of one god in a period when Islam had not yet emerged and the Prophet Mohammad had not yet been born shows how the epic would proceed. Hamza, who is described as the spreader of the belief of right, appeared before Mohammad and made it easier for him to spread Islam. Hamza performs the prayer, which is one of the basic beliefs of Islam and

exists in monotheistic religions, without interruption. The other uncles of the Prophet, Abbas and Abi Talib, who are important figures for the Shiites in the epic, are the figures who lag behind Hamza. It is noticeable in the epic that he had habits such as entertainment and drinking wine in his early periods, when his pre-Islamic heroism was emphasised. Together with the Shah of Yemen, whom he convinced of the 'true religion', he attends the entertainment organised by the Shah to celebrate his entry into the new religion and drinks wine. Hamza and Amr were travelling one day when they saw a pagan house. Amr told Hamza that the Meccans worshipped these idols. Hamza then grabs the clerics one by one, knocks them to the ground, collects the golden idols and sets fire to the pagoda. In the epic, pagans are shown as the opponents of the religion of Abraham. Hamza breaks the golden idols of those who worship idols in their places of worship and takes them as booty, and then sets fire to their churches. Clergymen are also called clergymen. Hamza believes in one god since his childhood. He behaves accordingly in his behaviour. All of Hamza's heroism is based on converting the infidels to the 'true religion', the religion of the prophet Abraham. No one can stand against his courage and convert to his religion. One of those who helped Hamza and prepared him to spread the true religion was the Angel Gabriel. One day he was passing by the mountain of Abu Qubays and saw a man descending from the top of the mountain. That man took Hamza to the top of the mountain and taught him many skills. This man is Gabriel disguised as a human being (She'ar, 1968, p. 36). It is no coincidence that the mountain where Hamza met the angel Gabriel was the Abu Qubays of the Rock near the Kaaba. In a hadith narrated from the Prophet Muhammad, it is explained that the first place created in the world was the Kaaba, and Abu Qubays was the first mountain created in the world and the other mountains were created from it (Bayhaqī, 2003).

In the Hamzanama, Hamza's weapon with which he will destroy his enemies emerges with divine help. He also needs a strong horse. Hamza's horse and weapon are obtained in an extraordinary way. Amr Umayya, the assistant and mentor of Hamza, who is Ayyar, is influential in Hamza's access to a horse and a weapon. Amr tells Hamza that he knows a skilful bow maker and that he can find the bow he needs there. Hamza and Amr go to the bow maker's house. When the bow maker saw Hamza, he immediately honoured him and brought the best bows he had. When the

bow maker sees this situation, he realises that Hamza is different from other braves. He told him that he had inherited it, that it was the bow of the prophet Isaac, and that this bow was only worthy of Hamza. When Hamza hears these words, he immediately asks him to go and bring that bow. The bowman brings the bow and gives it to Hamza. When Hamza aims and shoots an arrow, the arrow breaks the wall (She'ar, 1968, p. 36). Hamza's reaching for the weapon with which he will defeat his enemies is similar to Rustem's inheritance of the weapon from his ancestors in the *Shah-name*. In the *Shah-name*, there is no one to defend Iran, which is invaded by Efrasyab. Those who go to Zabulistan and meet Zal say that his son Rostam has proved himself with heroic deeds such as killing the elephant, but that he will be able to deal with Efrasyab. Zal states that his son Rostam is young. However, Rostam wants to face Efrasyab and thinks that he can defeat Efrasyab if he has a strong horse and weapon. So they brought a mace left from his grandfather Sam. This mace is a mace inherited from father to son, starting from Gershasb and reaching Sam. He is very happy when he gives this weapon to Rostam (Dumézil, 2016, p. 138-139).

Amr, who was Hamza's companion, needed to find Hamza a good weapon and a horse. He sets off with this intention. After travelling away from the city, he comes to a vineyard. There is a mansion in the vineyard. The inside of the mansion is white like rose water. There is a crystal throne inside the mansion. However, there are no people in this vineyard. Amr enters the mansion. He stands in front of the throne. When Amr sees this situation, he immediately runs away and goes to Mecca and tells Hamza what he saw. Hamza immediately went to his father and told him what he had heard from Amr. Abd-al-Motaleb said to Hamza, 'O son, this horse belongs to the Prophet Isaac. That vineyard belongs to the Prophet Solomon. How many times Nushirevan the just and the sultans went after that horse. Hamza and Amr set off. They reached the vineyard. Amr climbed the wall. Hamza came out after him. Amr said: 'O wrestler, now go and sit on the throne so that the horse will come out'. Hamza said, 'You come too. Amr said, 'I have seen those places and I will never come again.' Hamza smiled at his words. Hamza descended from the wall and entered the mansion. Suddenly the horse appeared. He turned towards Hamza. He opened his mouth and wanted to catch Hamza. Hamza got up and grabbed the horse's two ears. He grabbed the horse so hard that he destroyed the horse. Then he got on the horse and recognised the rider because he had been tamed by Prophet

Isaac. He calmed down and his old stiffness disappeared. When the horse slowed down, Hamza got down and the horse immediately went to him and stopped and did not go anywhere. Then wherever Hamza went, the horse followed him. So he got the horse of the prophet Isaac (She'ar, 1968, p.41).

Hamza woke up one night in fear while he was sleeping, called Amr and said to him: 'O Amr, I saw in my dream that some soldiers were besieging Mecca and were going to burn it down'. Amr said: 'O Amr, your dream is true, I will go and inform Mecca immediately' and set off. Amr quickly reached Mecca from Yemen and saw that Mecca was indeed besieged. He came to Hamza and said, 'These soldiers are from Khaybar, and the head of the army is Shahzadegh Ghisham bin Alkame Khaybar (She'ar, 1968, p. 55). Hamza learnt that Gisham's army had seventy thousand horsemen and foot soldiers. Seeing that the fortress of Mecca was under siege, Hamza uttered a cry so loud that 16 leagues of land and time, mountain and field shook. The bows of the soldiers fall from their hands to the ground. Ishmael said to his soldiers: "What was that sound? It came out of nowhere. It was as if the mountains collided and the sky collided with the earth". Then they heard Hamza's second shout. 'Abd-al-Motalleb and those inside Mecca rejoiced when they heard Hamza's shout. Thanks to Hamza, Mecca was saved from the 'kuffar'. Gisham's army was defeated. All the people and Abdulmuttalib came out of the fortress and stood in front of Hamza. When Hamza saw Gisham standing in the square, Hamza jumped on the horse of Prophet Isaac and went to fight him (She'ar, 1968, p. 55). As a result of his adventures in various countries and his battles to spread the true religion, Hamza was martyred.

4. Abu Muslim, Sacrifice of Ahl-e Beyt

In 16th-century Iran, the story of Abu-Moslem, in accordance with the image of the hero who fulfils the expectations of the people, was told as the protector of the Ahl-e beyt by avenging Karbala. From the beginning of the epic, Abu Muslim is the helper of the 'believers', the followers of the Ahl-e Beyt, against the Umayyads. The epic describes the appearance of Abu Moslem and the revenge of Ali's followers. In the epic tradition, a separate epic called Qesse-ye Sayyid Joneyd was produced on behalf of Joneyd, who is considered to be one of the ancestors of Abu-Moslem, who

is believed to have avenged Kerbala. The addition of Joneyd-nama to the epic chain is a result of the desire to portray Abu-Moslem as a legendary hero (Kufi, 2001). At the end of the Joneyd-nama, the reader refers to the Abu-Moslem-name to trace the story of his descendants (Yıldırım, 2015, p. 139). In the parable of Joneyd, who Sayyid Joneyd actually was and how he came to be is connected to the Abbasids through a story. According to this story, the Abbasid Caliph Harun Rashid, who had listened to various heroic stories, including the epic of Abu Muslim, wanted to hear a new story. So he summoned a storyteller named Abu Hafs and asked him to tell a new story. Abu Hafs, upon the request of the caliph, tells stories such as Shah-name, Qesse-ye Hamze, Qesse-ye Qeran-e Habashi. However, when the caliph's sadness did not pass, he started to tell the story of Sayyid Joneyd. Thus, the story of Sayyid Joneyd is revealed. According to the story of Sayyid Joneyd, in order for a hero like Abu-Moslem to be born, Junaid, the son of Sayyid Asad, the nephew of Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet Mohammad, was born. The prognosticators foretold that he would have a son named Abu-Moslem and that he would be like Hamza in valour and courage. According to Joneyd-nama, Joneyd, who was born in this period when Yazid and Marwan regarded Muslims as Kharijites and persecution and torture increased, became the protector of the *Ahl-e beyt* with his heroism: "They called a physician of virtue and honour to cure Abbas. The physician is aware of everything. He knew the story of Asad and the girl (Abbas' concubine). He said that a son would be born from their marriage, and he would be the wrestler of the time. A wrestler like him did not come instead of Hamza. The adventure of Asad and the girl will take a very strange turn, their epic will be unique, one of Asad's descendants will be born, his name will be Abu-Moslem and he will remove the curse on the dynasty. Islam will progress thanks to him". On the advice of the physician, Asad and the concubine got married. From their marriage, Joneyd, who was strong like Hamza, was born (Kufi, 2001, p. 216).

The epic story of Abu- Moslem revolves around the struggle against the Umayyads, who are seen as Kharijites. Terms such as Haramzade, Kharijites are used to characterise the Umayyads. Abu- Moslem is Abu Turabi. Such expressions are used to describe the *Ahl-e beyt* and their enemies in the works called *Maktel*, which were written to narrate the martyrdom of Husayn. In these works, the relatives and followers of Muhammad are referred to as 'Sunnis'. The enemies of the *Ahl-e beyt* are

referred to by names such as Kharijites and Marwanis (Yıldırım, 2015, p. 134-135). According to Abu-Moslem-nama, there are two brothers from the Tay tribe named Joneyd and Mühahlil. Joneyd has two sons named Umran and Asad. Joneyd 's brother Mühahlil is the head of Tay tribe. However, he is a haramzade Kharijite. No one can speak the name of Ali in his presence. He has a beautiful-faced, intelligent, believer [friend of the Ahl-e beyt] daughter. One day, while waiting at the roadside, Asad saw this beautiful girl and fell in love with her. After various adventures, they got married and Abu-Moslem was born from this marriage. According to the Abu-Moslem-nama Abu-Moslem's father Asad, while working as a guard of Hajjaj b. Yusuf, the ruler of Isfahan, was killed by Hajjaj when he killed someone who blasphemed Ali, and his mother Khalime was blinded. Khalime and her son Abdurrahman were left poor and orphaned. Hodja Kesir, a friend of Asad, helped them and brought them to Merv in Khorasan. Khoja Kesir, who is shown here as a friend of Abu-Moslem's father Asad, is Suleiman bin Kathir, a historical figure who was one of the leaders of the Abbasid revolution in Khorasan. In the epic, Suleiman bin Kathir is described as someone who helped Abu-Moslem under the name of Khoja Kesir. In time, Khoja Kesir became the vizier of Nasir al-Sayyar, the ruler of Khorasan. Khoja Kesir's two sons, Uthman and Suleiman, who were about Abu-Moslem's age, became Abu-Moslem's friends and supporters. With their support, Abu-Moslem started his struggle in Khorasan with the followers of the Ahl-e beyt, who were called 'believers' and 'Muslims', that is, against the Umayyad caliphate (Afshari, 2021, p. 421-422). One day Abu-Moslem asked his mother why Ali was constantly insulted. His mother told him that Ali was 'Shah-e Merdan' and that his father had been killed because of his love for Ali. She tells him that Abu-Moslem must also protect himself, otherwise he might be killed. Upon hearing this, Abu-Moslem's feelings of revenge arise; he prays and prays for his father and Ali. Hurdek, the blacksmith, made Abu-Moslem's axe with a piece of Ali's sword Zulfiqar and handed it to him. Thus, Abu-Moslem is ready to avenge the Ahl-e Beyt against the Kharijites. When all the work of the axe was finished, Hurdek said to Abu Moslem, 'We made this axe for the sake of Allah and for the expulsion of the enemies of Allah. Give us the reward of a thousand Kharijites that you will kill with this axe.' Abu-Moslem promised that he would recognise the value of this axe and would donate to them the reward of killing ten thousand Kharijites. Ali's influence is

noticeable in the stories told in *Abu-Moslem-nama*. The heroes of the epic make their work easier with Ali's guardianship. Suleiman bin Kathir, the representative of the Abbasid revolution in Khorasan, is a believer in the *Ahl-e Beyt*. He is known as Abu Turabi, that is, a supporter of Ali (Tarsusi, 2001, p. 541). Hurdek then said that there were ten thousand Shiite guardian in Merv under the leadership of Khoja Suleiman, and that he would send a message to them and organise an assembly in three days, and that he would present Abu-Moslem to those present at this assembly and hand over the axe he had made in their presence. So Abu-Moslem went to his village to return three days later to receive the axe. After receiving his axe, he started his struggle against the Umayyads. Abu-Moslem begins to fight against the Umayyads, who are called Kharijites in the book, in order to avenge the revenge of the *Ahl-e Beyt*. Abu Muslim's axe has an epic power. He destroyed his enemies in a short time. Abu Moslem and the Umayyad commander Timurtash hit their heads so hard that their heads split in two. He sent a salawat [pray] for to the Messenger of Allah and went on the attack (Tarsusi, 2001, p. 600).

Ali's influence is noticeable in the stories told in *Abu-Moslem-nama*. The heroes of the epic make their work easier with Ali's guardianship. Suleiman bin Kathir, the representative of the Abbasid revolution in Khorasan, is a believer in the *Ahl-e Beyt*. He is known as Abu Turabi, that is, a supporter of Ali. The Umayyad governor of Khorasan was a Kharijite. His viziers, named Sohrat and Hazifa, were also Kharijites. In other words, according to the epic, they are people who have not received their share of the love of *Ahl-e Beyt*. The vizier and his men want to seize Suleiman's vineyard. One day, Hazifa said to Sohrat, "This is Hodja Kesir Abu Turabi". Sohrat replied, "We cannot catch him until he is not known". Some time after this incident, the spring season came. Sohrat and Hazifa wanted to enter the vineyard of Suleiman bin Kathir to drink wine. One day, Sohrat and the other Kharijites came to the vineyard behind the house of the Hodja (Suleiman bin Kathir). They drank wine until it was time for prayer. His men are with Sohrat and they get drunk. Sohrat turns his face towards Hodja and calls him to him and asks him to drink a glass of wine. Hodja, on the other hand, refuses to drink wine. They hold the Hodja and try to force him to drink wine. They try to get him drunk by putting various wine glasses in his hand. Sohrat turns to Hazifa and asks him to ask Khoja about Abu Turab. The governor of Khorasan [Sohrat] asks Suleiman what

he thinks about Abu Turab. Hodja Kesir was quite drunk. In spite of this state of mind, Hodja mentioned Ali. They [Kharijites] thought that he was talking about Marwan. Khoja Kesir told his son Qasim about what had happened to him. Qasim said, "O my father, what did they ask you?" Hodja said, "I was going to tell the attributes of Shah-e-Walayāt, but I thought that they were Kharijites; they would not be able to bear the mention of Ali, and a fight would break out between us. Qasim replied, "Why did you tolerate this situation, my father? We have only one head, and it should be sacrificed to Shah-e-Mardan. When Solomon hears these words from his son, he asks him to prepare twenty braves. He orders them to be ready with war clothes and tools. Hodja comes back to the assembly and takes his seat with hatred. Hazifa fills another glass and gives it to the teacher. Sohrat suddenly turns to the hodja and asks him what he thinks about the love of Abu Turab. However, the hodja was now unconscious. Turning to Khazifa, he said, "How dare I characterise him, but I will tell you something, so listen," and recited an ode about Ali. When Sohrat heard the ode, he was overwhelmed. There is a branch of flowers in front of him. He lifts it and throws it in the face of the teacher. The flower turns from him and hits a slave with a beautiful face behind the teacher and scatters his brains. There is also a flower in front of the hodja. Hodja, taking the flower, says, "O dog, why are you throwing this flower? Hazifa shouted at the khoja and said, 'O Abu Turabi, how dare you talk to the amir of Khorasan in this way and attack him with a flower? Then Hodja got up in anger and hit Hazifa's forehead with the branch of the flower and scattered his brains" (Tarsusi, 2001, p. 541). Throughout Abu-Moslem's narrative, the struggle against the Umayyads continued, and the followers of the Ahl-e Beyt were successful. The sacred mission of the Ahl-e Beyt plays an important role in this struggle.

5. Conclusion

The transformation of literary genres after the Safavid rule in Iran is an important question. The background of the most popular personality among people contains important clues about the mentality of the people. The hero is born with the good news of the prophet or an important figure from whom he is descended. In his struggle against the evil ones, he takes action to avenge his descendant. He acquires a legendary weapon. This weapon is also obtained with the help of the unseen and is the weapon of the hero from whom he is descended. The hero always has a helper

who guides and helps him. This helper is the Prophet Muhammad, Prophet Ali or Gabriel. They guide the heroes through a dream or an inspiration from the unseen. For the Iranians, who are familiar with the tradition of reading the Shahnameh, telling religious stories is something they are not alien to. Storytelling, which can be considered a continuation of the oral cultural tradition developed in pre-Islamic periods and with Islam, took on a new form during the Safavid period. In this period, legendary narratives intertwined with heroic narratives based on national culture gained a religious identity. Although religious-epic stories seem to have different plots, they are similar in terms of procedure and content. Epics foreshadow the next story and give clues that carry the heroes to the same world of mind. The stories of Abu Muslim and Hamza, which were read and listened to among the people, became one of the Safavids' methods of Shiism. This shows that a cultural reproduction was taking place. It cannot be ignored that religious life is not only understood by the official sect of the state, but also that the religious stories read and listened to among the people shape the feelings of the people. Although the epic of Abu Muslim was read in Iran for a long time, it was later replaced by the stories of Hamza and other Islamic heroes. Because of his important role in the foundation of the Abbasids, Abu Muslim drew the reaction of the Safavid Shiite scholars and was tried to be erased from the minds of the people. The belief in Abu Muslim as the avenging hero of Karbala was replaced by narratives about the Prophet and his relatives.

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