




## An Examination of the Application of Qur'anic Verses in the Historiography of Safavid Wars (907-1038 AH / 1501-1629 CE)

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### Introduction

The establishment of the Safavid dynasty in Iran in 907 AH (1501 CE) and the continuation of its rule were accompanied by numerous wars. These conflicts occurred both internally-to suppress domestic opposition-and externally, in response to foreign threats. While some resulted in Safavid victories, others ended in failure. Safavid historians were expected to narrate these wars regardless of the outcome, but in ways that would not displease the ruling monarchs. Accordingly, their narratives were crafted in alignment with the worldview and religious ideology of the Safavid state. One of the most prominent features of Safavid war historiography was the incorporation of Qur'anic verses-referred to as āyeh-negārī. The primary aim of this practice was to legitimize the military actions of the Safavid kings.

### Methodology

This study employs a historical-analytical method to examine the issue. Data were collected through library-based research and analyzed through interpretive reasoning grounded in a variety of sources. In historical research, the library method remains fundamental and indispensable. The key sources used in this study are historical texts authored by Safavid historians up to the end of the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (d. 1038 AH / 1629 CE). All extant Safavid-era chronicles were reviewed. While some offered little relevant information, many made significant use of āyeh-negārī. It appears that the closer a historical account was written to the time of the actual battles, the more extensive the use of Qur'anic verses.

For example, Futhūhāt-e Shāhī by Amīnī Haravī, composed during the reign of Shah Ismā'īl, draws heavily upon Qur'anic citations. In contrast, Tārīkh-e 'Ālamārā-ye 'Abbāsī, written in Shah 'Abbās's reign, relies less on verses when recounting Shah Ismā'īl's battles-though Iskandar Beg himself draws extensively upon the Qur'an when narrating Shah 'Abbās's campaigns. In addition to first-hand sources from the Safavid period, this study also incorporates findings from modern research. Ultimately, data were gathered using a library-based approach, and conclusions were drawn through textual interpretation and critical analysis.

### Findings

Safavid historiography-shaped by the broader ideological atmosphere, Safavid royal policy, and the religious foundations of the dynasty-tended to adopt a theological approach to historical writing. Historians acted as ideological agents and legitimacy-builders for the Safavid state. Their



role was to chronicle the dynasty's numerous military campaigns in a way that covered all aspects of warfare while simultaneously reinforcing the legitimacy of Safavid rule.

One of the main strategies employed to confer such legitimacy was the use of Qur'anic verses. In recounting Safavid military history, historians sought not only to detail the kings' victories but also to justify their violent actions on the battlefield. They employed verses that would portray the brutality of war as aligned with divine purposes, thereby presenting acts of war as the implementation of God's commands.

Safavid historians attributed military success solely to the will of God and supported this notion through *āyeh-negārī*. However, in cases of defeat, they typically avoided citing Qur'anic verses and instead framed the loss as a matter of divine predestination. Although most of the Safavid conflicts were with other Muslims, historians used verses related to *jihād* to present these wars as sacred struggles against unbelievers, similar to the Prophet's campaigns.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, Safavid historians relied heavily on the Qur'an to legitimize warfare, link events to scripture, and elevate the status of rulers. The findings indicate that their *āyeh-negārī* narratives served the following purposes: legitimizing the wars, justifying violent conduct, explaining defeats in fatalistic terms, and attributing victories to divine will—often by likening the kings to prophets. The verses were carefully selected to align with and confirm the ideological goals of the writers.

### **Keywords**

Safavid, Historiography, Qur'anic Verses, War, Narrative.

### **Ethical Considerations**

**Compliance with research ethics.** The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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