

Original Research Article

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Reflection of Iranian Religion, History, Politics, and Culture in Qutb Shahi Falnama of Deccan

Abstract

Problem Definition: The era of the Qutb Shahi dynasty in the Deccan is one of the top periods of Iranian culture outside its geographical borders. Due to being of Iranian origin and Shiite, the Qutb Shahi dynasty had a notable tendency towards Iranian culture, and a large number of Iranian immigrants and brokers (agents) in the Deccan added to the prosperity of Iranian culture in their territory. With the support of Iranian culture, many artistic and literary works were formed, comprising a magnificent cultural interaction between the culture of South India and Iran. One of these works is an illustrated Falnama (Book of Omens) prepared in Golconda. This Falnama includes 37 paintings with different themes, each of which can be somehow related to Iranian culture, politics, and religion. Therefore, the problem of this research is "to what extent it is possible to read out different aspects of Iranian culture and its influence in Qutb Shahi court culture through the different themes of the paintings in this book".

Objective: The aim of this research is to know more about the influence of Iranian culture in the Indian subcontinent, especially in the Deccan region.

Research Method: Using a descriptive-analytical method and concerning historical documents, the influence of different cultural aspects in Deccan is analyzed.

Results: Khalili Falnama's paintings are a mixture of religious and Islamic themes focused on Shiism. In addition to these themes, several paintings deal with the literary issues, and ancient history of Iran and one painting of this manuscript covers the contemporary history of that time by addressing Shah Tahmasp. Scrutiny in the paintings shows that in all of them and various forms, different cultural and even political aspects of Iran are witnessed, from the formal culture to the public culture, which indicates the closeness of these two cultures.

Keywords

Shiite art, Qutb Shahi Dynasty, Falnama Writing, Iranian culture, Golconda/Khalili Falnama

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Introduction

At the same time with the Safavids, the scope of Iranian culture expanded significantly in the light of art, the Persian language, and its emotive literature, which had long been famous as a cultural model in the surrounding lands of Iran. The territory of this world of Iranian culture covered a range from East to West Asia. During this period, more than ever, the traditions of Iranian culture pervaded beyond its conventional geographical boundaries and influenced elites and even ordinary people in Far Asia, Central Asia, Minor Asia, and India. The Persian language was the most important link in this cultural chain because it was not only one language; it included a collection of history and literature, poetry, calligraphy, and other arts. One of the critical centers of influence on Iranian culture and art was the different regions of the Indian subcontinent. In the meantime, although the Gurkans of Delhi (Mughals) are famous, the Deccan dynasties also played an essential role in this cultural evolution. Among the most critical dynasties were the Qutb Shahids, who showed great interest in Iranian culture due to their Shiite religion and relative dependence on the Turkmens who ruled the west of Iran and their alliance with the Safavids. During their rule over the Deccan, valuable cultural works were formed, rooted in Iranian culture in many ways. Among them is an illustrated Falnama which is kept in the "Nasser Khalili Collection" today. Apart from the literary and artistic aspects of this Falnama, one of the essential aspects of the importance of this manuscript can be seen in the influence of Qutb Shahids of Deccan on various aspects of the culture, beliefs, and politics of Iran in the Safavid era. Therefore, the problem of this research is to analyze Golconda/Khalili Falnama's illustrations and examine the influence of many Iranian cultural and political discourses on this manuscript and, in a broader sense, the Indian Qutb Shahi culture. Khalili Falnama is an illustrated manuscript created in Golconda Fort and follows the structure of illustrated Falnamas that were popular in Iran and the Ottoman Empire at that time. Therefore, it is natural that it has followed the patterns of Safavid Falnamas in some ways, especially in terms of structure and aesthetics. However, regarding the theme of the paintings, sometimes some differences can tell aspects of the cultural history of Qutb Shahids and the way of interaction with Iranian culture. Intending to know the scope of Iranian culture, this research seeks to read out parts of the discourses of Safavid Iranian and Shiite culture in Deccan through reading the themes of Khalili Falnama.

Research Method

This article is qualitative, and its method is descriptive-analytical; after describing the cultural characteristics of Deccan Shia dynasties -specifically Qutb Shahids- it deals with how they interacted with Iran in their time. Then, through the reading and analysis of four paintings from the Khalili version of Falnama and their comparison with ideological and cultural foundations taken from Iran, how the religious, historical, literary, and political themes of Iran are reflected in the art of Qutb Shahi's court is investigated. In fact, through the aesthetic analysis of the paintings, the way of reflecting different religious, mythological, historical, and literary aspects of Safavid Iran through Khalili Falnama's paintings is read out. Before starting the discussion, it should be mentioned that the term that is frequently used in this research is "Iranian" or "Iranian culture" in a special way. The use of this phrase in this research does not mean the land of Iran with its geography and culture; Rather, its application goes beyond the emphasis on Iran's political geography. It includes a vast world, which is generally called "Persian Cosmopolis" in English-language sources, and what it means is the extent of influence of Iranian culture centered on the

Persian language in different lands and the construction of the cultural world formed with it (Amanat, 2020, p. 15).

Research Background

Some articles have been written about the influence of Iranian culture on the art and culture of the Deccan. The authors mainly focus on the Shiite culture or the role of Iranians in the Deccan. There is a gap in the literature for studies related to art in this land. In the area of Khalili Falnama, because not much time has passed since the introduction of this version, there is no other research available except for one article. "Parikh" (2020), in an article entitled "Faith and destiny: Khalili Falnama and Shia identity in Golconda Fort," investigated the role of Shiism in the Deccan and its influence on Khalili Falnama and analyzed some of the illustrations of this manuscript concerning the foundations of Shiism. In this context, Parikh (2022) himself has published his research collection in an expanded form in the book Khalili Falnameh, which provides more information from this manuscript to the audience. In Iran, "Moeinoddini and Olyaei Shad" (2021), in an article entitled "Interaction of local features of Deccan painting with Iranian painting in Golconda/Khalili version of Falnama", apart from analyzing the content of the paintings, examined the style of the images of this Falnama and how they are influenced by Safavid painting, and their differences with Iranian examples. However, other articles have discussed the influence of Iranian art on painting in the Deccan region; Among them, "Overton" (2016), in the article entitled "Book culture, royal libraries, and Iranian painting in Bijapur 1580-1630", deals with the art of the Adel Shahi Dynasty of Deccan. What makes the current research different from other samples is the comparative analysis of the paintings with the political and social conditions and the Deccan and Safavid culture and how the political conditions of the Deccan have caused this manuscript to reflect different aspects of Iranian culture from mythological, literary, religious, and even contemporary history.

Islam and the Subcontinent

The history of cultural contact between Iranians and India goes back a long time ago, from the racial commonality of Indian and Iranian peoples to some common myths. Apart from this, an essential part of the apparent manifestation of cultural contact between these two ancient lands can be seen in the frequency of common words between them, including the abundance of Persian words in Indian languages, the history of which goes back to the confrontation between Achaemenid Cyrus Corps and the Indians (Seyfi Bakhtiari & Mohammad Akmal, 2013, p. 76). It continued during the Parthian and Sasanian eras; however, the peak of Islam's influence in India was with the arrival of Muslim governments and the spread of the Urdu language and Persian literature. Therefore, Islam should be considered a significant turning point in the cultural contact between Iranian and Indian cultures. Although part of the introduction of Indians to Islam was peaceful and through acquaintance with Muslim merchants, the peak of Islam's influence in this land occurred with the Muslim rulers' conquest of the country. Gradually, the Muslim conquerors institutionalized Islamic culture in this country by building mosques and settling their families and descendants. Successively a powerful community of Muslims was formed alongside and in interaction with the native inhabitants of India. The result was a cultural bond between Muslims and different native tribes. It was India, of course, considered an essential part of this integrated culture derived from the patterns of Iranian culture.

Iranian-Islamic culture and the south of the subcontinent

The first pervasive influence of Iranian culture in India started with the invasion of Ghaznavids and the application of Iranian political and administrative management patterns in this country. The Ghaznavids implemented a complete system of efficient and administrative organizations in the Iranian world, which they borrowed from the Samanids in India. The tradition of court support for Persian arts and crafts and literature was used in the political economy of most regions of India in the following centuries (Eaton, 2019, p. 48). After that, India became one of the most important centers of influence on Iranian culture and art. Although with the emergence of Islam in India, Arabs, Afghans, and Turks found their place in this land, the status of Iranians and the Persian language was different (Thapar, 1990, p. 198). Gradually, as Islam progressed in India, Iranian culture and art also entered other areas of India, including the Deccan in the south of the Indian subcontinent. Then, the Deccan became one of the most important territories of Islamic and then Iranian culture. Specifically, the flourishing of Iranian culture in the Deccan increased after the independence of this region from Delhi domination in 748 AH / 1347 AD and with the rise of Bahmani Sultanate (933-748 AH / 1527-1347 AD) as the first independent Islamic government in this region. However, long before the Bahmani period, direct relations between the western coasts of India and Iran were established through the port of the Persian Gulf (Alam & Subrahmanyam, 2020, p. 77). The consequence of Deccan's independence from Delhi led to a friendly relationship between the rulers of this land and Iran. One of the turning points of the relations between these two lands started at the time of the Timurids. From the very beginning, contrary to Timur's warlike spirit, a friendly relationship was formed between him and Sultan Firouz VIII (825-799 AH/1422-1397 AD), which was strengthened by sending letters and gifts. The result was the departure of ships from Indian ports that came to the Persian Gulf every year for trade and to attract talented human resources (Overton, 2020, p. 9). Regardless of the political system and commercial relations, the journey of Nematollahi Dervish to the Deccan played an essential role in strengthening the cultural ties between the Timurids and the Deccan. After the death of Timur, this process continued and peaked during the Safavid era.

Persian language in Deccan

Historically, what formed the foundation of the Deccan cultural realm was rooted in the two civilizational cultures of the Sanskrit world and the Iranian world (Flatt, 2019, p. 19). In the meantime, the most crucial focal point connecting the Deccan to the Iranian world was the Persian language. Historically, the Persian language went through a period of gradual transformation and evolution along with the Ghaznavids and Ghorians, and then the Baburians [and the Deccan sultans] in the land of India from the beginning of the 5th century A.H./11th A.D. to the end of the 13th century A.H./19th A.D (Hekmat, 1958, p. 84). In the Deccan, the Persian language was prevalent, and the choice of Persian as the official language of the Bahmani court intensified the influence of Iranian culture and literature in this region. With the collapse of the Bahmanians, not only did the prestige of Persian not decrease, but it became more prosperous. While Turkish became the official language of the court right in the middle of the Safavid rule over Iran and in the heart of Isfahan, the official language of the court of some Sultans of the Deccan was Persian. Although some of them, like Adel Shahian and Qutb Shahian, were of Turkish descent like the Safavids and were also proud of their ancestry, their literary language and culture were Persian (Schimmel, 2017, p. 279). Specifically, Qutb Shahian paid special attention to Persian culture and literature, and their support for Persian-speaking writers and poets made their

court the destination of many first-rate writers of their time. During their rule, an era of the flourishing of art and literature centered on Iranian culture was formed in the Deccan, whose valuable works have remained. In the meantime, a large number of Iranian immigrants to the Deccan increased the influence of the cultural and religious foundations of the Iranians in the Deccan; So that during the Safavid era, different regions of India and especially the Deccan, were considered the first choice of Iranian elites to migrate and some of them found a social base in India. As Saedi Shirazi in Hadiqa al-Salatin describes the multitude of jobs that were held by the Iranian immigrants as follows: "either their noble sultans and ministers of high status with the majority of a victorious army and most of the officials and authoritative penmen and the people of positions and other parties and most of the soldiers are all Iranian people" (Saedi Shirazi, 1961, p. 204). Sometimes immigrants like Sheikh Nematollahi were able to attract many followers until Deccan became one of the most important bases of mysticism. The result of these migrations was a mixture of a kind of social life in a foreign land and its connection with the culture of their ancestors. Immigrants who migrated from Iran to Deccan played a prominent role in mixing the culture of Deccan with Iranian culture.

Shiism in the Deccan

Along with other elements, Shiism was also one of the most important influencing factors of Iranian culture in the Deccan, which was also related to the prestige and status of some powerful Iranian elites. People like Mir Fazlollah Ibn Feyzollah Injavay Shirazi 882 AH/ 1478 AD or Imadoddin Mahmoud Gavan (886-814 AH/ 1481-1411 AD), the influential minister of Bahmani, played an essential role in creating the social base of Shiism among the Bahmani of Deccan. Although clearly, the Bahmani kings never formally supported the Shia religion until the establishment of the Deccan Shia governments in this region (early 10th century A.H./early 16th century A.D.) (Sadeghi Alavi, 2014, p. 81). However, this cultural influence of the Shia in the Deccan led to the rise and impact of the Shia culture when the more minor dynasties of the Deccan were dominating. In the meantime, the three dynasties of Qutb Shahi, Adil Shahi, and Nizam Shahi accepted Shia as the formal religion of their land. They gave broad support to Shia scholars and scientists. They invited many of them from Iran, Iraq, and other Shia lands to the Deccan. In this period, the Deccan became one of the main bases of Shiites in the Indian subcontinent, and many Shiites from all over the world migrated there (Masoumi & Askarpour, 2014, p. 5). This era was concurrent with the Safavid rule in Iran, and the Shia religion became one of the strong links between the Deccan sultans and Iran.

Deccan and Safavids

The turning point of Deccan's relations during the time of its five sultans was with the Shiite government of Iran's Safavid religion, which was considered a kind of spiritual support and power for the Deccan sultans. The alliance with the Safavids and the peak of Shah Abbas's control could increase their security level against their powerful neighbor, the Gurkans. The legendary wealth of the Deccan was the most important element that caused the threat of Gurkanians to be felt over the Deccan from around 998 AH/1590 AD (Alam & Subramanyam, 2020, p. 83). This event happened, and the request of the Deccan sultans to Shah Abbas made him ask Jahangir, who was preparing to attack the Deccan, to desist from the Deccan campaign in a letter (Skanderbeyk Turkman, 2003, p. 866). Apart from this, the mediation of a common allegiant called the Sufis (Sufiyan) played a constructive role in the internal disputes and rivalries of the Deccan sultans. On the other hand, the Safavids were

considered more than an ally as an ideological party because, with the formalization of Twelver Shiism in some areas of the Deccan, the need for Shia scholars intensified, causing them to become more dependent on Iran. This caused Iranian Shia scholars to migrate to the Deccan and gradually promote Shia principles and beliefs, such as offering congregational prayers and Friday prayers in mosques (Khaledi, 2004, p. 55). As a result, the cultural connection between Safavid Iran and Deccan's Shia community increased. On the other hand, the relationship with the Deccan was also not free from benefits for the Safavids because the existence of land with the formal Shiite religion made the Shiite world appear more significant, and the Safavids would have more symbolic power in their formation against the Sunni Ottomans. This way, the Safavids could increase their influence in India and take advantage of its political privileges.

Qutb Shahi Dynasty

As mentioned, the Bahmanis were the first independent Muslim dynasty of the Deccan; However, gradually, due to the natural geography of the Deccan and their political weakness at the end of the 9th century, the land of the Deccan was divided between the Bahmani chieftains and the five dynasties of the Barid Shahi of Bidar (1028-897 AH / 1619-1491 AD), the Adil Shahi of Bijapur (1097 AD -895 AH/ 1685-1490 AD), the Nizam Shahi of Ahmadnagar (1046-895 AH/ 1636-1490 AD), the Imadshahi of Berar (1682-896 AH/ 1574-1491 AD), and Qutb Shahi of Golconda and Hyderabad (1098-901 AH/1687-1496 AD) took power (Masoumi & Askarpour, 2014, p. 4). Qutb Shahids' origin reached the Qara Qoyunlu; therefore, they carried the customs and culture of their ancestors: influential people who were able to create brilliant masterpieces in the cultural history of Iran in Tabriz (Hollister, 1994, p. 135). Perhaps these cultural roots made the Qutb Shahids always maintain their tendency towards Iranian culture and have the closest relationship with the Safavids among the Deccan governments. Sultan Qoli (875-950 AH/1470-1543), the founder of this dynasty, as he was a Shia, with the encouragement of Shah Ismail, made Shiism the formal religion of Qutb Shahids. To show his devotion to the Safavids, he recited Shah Ismail's name before his own name in his sermons (Karami, 1994, p. 46). From then on, a lot of communication was established between them and the Safavids. This era can be considered one of the most important eras of the flourishing of the Persian language outside the borders of Iran. In addition, these close relations with the Safavids made the art of the Qutb Shahids court more influenced by Iran. As a result, a collection of magnificent works was produced, each resulting from cultural and artistic interaction with Iran in different aspects. Golconda/Khalili Illustrated Falnama is also one of the works that can show a collection of different types of Qutb Shahi's influence on Iran's culture, politics, belief, and history in the hearts of the Qutb Shahi sultans.

Khalili Falnama (Golconda)

Khalili Falnama was written in the middle of the eleventh century A.H./seventeenth century A.D. based on the tradition of Iranian illustrated Falnama, and it is the only manuscript with Iranian roots seen in India so far. Although it is not clear who ordered this Falnama, according to the materials and techniques used in it, especially the more than usual amount of gold and silver and the complex implementation of Tezkire (memorandum) and texts, it was undoubtedly commissioned by a royal partisan or at least a court official (Parikh, 2020, p. 228). This manuscript includes 37 paintings, each related to a story. The paintings are on the right side of the book and on the left side of the omen text, associated with the same image, which is a description of the good and bad luck of the omen and the change of the

future. At the bottom of each painting, a sentence is written that tells the image's story, and the viewer recognizes the characters based on it. In terms of stylistics, the illustrations in this book, despite benefiting from the local traditions of Deccan and Gurkans, are primarily influenced by the paintings of the Safavid court, especially the schools of late Herat, Tabriz, Qazvin, and of course, Bukhara. This can be observed from the high similarity between some of the paintings of this Falnama with other illustrated Safavid Falnamas; Therefore, it can be concluded that before the preparation of this manuscript, examples of Safavid samples had found their way to Golconda and became a source of influence. In terms of subject matter and thematics, Khalili Falnama, like other illustrated Safavid Falnamas, has similar topics that "Masouma Farhad and Sarpil Baji" (2009) have categorized in the book related to the exhibition of Safavid Illustrated Falnamas. By studying the paintings of four well-known Falnamas (Tahmasbi Falnama (Dispersed), Topkapi Persian Falnama, Dresden Falnama, Sultan Ahmad I Falnama), they identified five subjects and general themes, which are: Abrahamic Traditions, the Hereafter, themes related to idolatry, narratives related to sages, heroes, and villains as well as constellations, planets, and stars. Similar topics are used in Khalili Falnama, like the other ones. The differences include no painting with the subject of constellations and, instead, a painting dedicated to the war of Shah Tahamasb, which can be considered a subset of sages and heroes. To identify the story of the paintings, apart from the text to which the image is related, a title is also written under each painting, describing its story. However, in the structure of each artwork, what represents their main characters is the halo of light drawn in the form of a flame around the heads of the holy figures; In this way, the faces of the Shia prophets and innocents are immersed in the flames of light and illustrating their faces have been avoided. The faces of the innocents are covered with a white and short veil, the history of which goes back to the representation of the image of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the 10th century A.H./16th A.D. It was also used for Shia Imams with a similar purpose. This method is one of the characteristics of illustration believed by Shias in the early Safavid period (Assar Kashani, 2014, p. 102). Unlike the prophet and the Shia innocents, other religious characters, including the prophets, are depicted without veils. The difference is that their sacred and spiritual position, with the aura of glowing fire around their heads, has distinguished them from other characters. One of the important signs of the tendency towards Shiism in this manuscript is the illustration of Abu Bakr; However, he is one of the Rashidin caliphs; unlike the innocent Shiites, Abu Bakr is depicted without a halo of light. In terms of content, the paintings of this Falnama can be categorized in different ways; However, to match with other research related to the themes of illustrated Falnama, the model used by Masoumeh Farhad and Sarpil Baji has been considered. It should be noted that this category of themes is the authors' suggestion, and some paintings can also be placed under some other theme categories. However, this categorization is the criterion for evaluating the influence of Qutb Shahids on different aspects of Iranian culture.

1. Themes of Abrahamic religions: Golconda Falnama is considered a collection of paintings related to the history of Abrahamic religions, from the narratives associated with Judaism and Christianity to Islam and Shia religion, so 30 of the 37 paintings of this Falnama contain religious themes. The rest of the paintings address historical, mythological, and literary subjects (See Table 1). Some images, such as the construction of Noah's ark, can also be seen in other well-known Falnamas. The theme of this group of paintings is to deal with issues that are valid among the followers of other Abrahamic religions, apart from Islam. Among the most famous of them, the painting of "Joseph's entry into the party of Zuleikha (ورود یوسف به مهمانی زلیخا)", or "Suleiman's court (بارگاه سلیمان)" (See Figure 1) can be

mentioned, which are also illustrated in many other religious books. Some of these paintings have good omens, and some have bad omens, such as "hanging a pious Barsisa (دار کشیدن (بر صیصای عابد)". The stories of these paintings are more than taken from Jewish and Christian books; they are adapted from books written by Muslims, and among them, the histories of Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, the history of Abu Ali Muhammad Balami, various versions of the stories of the Prophets (قصص الانبياء) (Farhad & Bagci, 2009, p. 35). can be pointed out. In the meantime, the stories of the Prophets (قصص الانبياء) was considered one of the most important Shia reference books and was illustrated many times in Iran. The composition of these stories is a mixture of authentic religious traditions as well as less original or folk traditions.

Table 1. Paintings with the themes of Abrahamic religions. Source: Authors.

No	Title of Painting	No	Title of Painting
1	Zuleikha assembly and cutting the guests' fingers when they saw Joseph	7	Solomon and Balqis court
2	Salih the prophet and the miracle of Naqah	8	Building Noah's Ark
3	Hanging the adulterous Barsisa	9	Finding Zechariah the prophet in the tree
4	Giving the news of Joseph's death to Jacob	10	Shadad behind the gates of heaven
5	Pharaoh and Moses' childhood	11	The killing of prophet Yahya
6	Zechariah and Yahya meeting Maryam and her child	12	Judgment Day (with the theme of the Hereafter world)



Figure 1. Solomon the prophet and Balqis, Golconda Falnameh, (about 1019-1039 AH/ 1630-1610 AD). Nasser Khalili collection. Source: <https://khalilicollections.org>.



Figure 2. Prophet (PBUH) and Abu Bakr hiding in the cave, Golconda Falnama, (around 1019-1039 AH/ 1610-1630 AD). Nasser Khalili collection. Source: <https://khalilicollections.org>.

2. History of Islam: Another group of paintings in this Falnama contains Islamic traditions that are generally related to the beginning of Islam and the events in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and generally include agreed-upon narrations among all Islamic sects (See Table 2). Although there are some disagreements; For example, the painting of "the hiding of the Prophet and Abu Bakr" is taken from a narration that is generally seen in the later sources of Sunnis (See Figure 2). In this narration, Abu Bakr puts his foot on the snakes' hole to prevent the prophet from being harmed in the cave of Thor to prevent them from attacking the prophet. This is a narration that Shiites consider doubtful and weak. Abdul Hossein Amini has discussed the doubts about this narration in his book *Al-Ghadir* (Amini, 1995,

pp. 65-67). Therefore, it can be said that a wide range of religious books has been the source of the narrations of this manuscript.

Table 2. Paintings with themes of Islamic history. Source: Authors.

No	Title of Painting	No	Title of Painting
1	Jafar Tayar in the court of the king of Abyssinia	4	Prophet's sermon in Medina
2	The prophet's visit to the Kaaba	5	Hiding the Prophet and Abu Bakr in the cave
3	Ascension of the Prophet		

3. Shiite themes: The most important paintings of this Falnama depict narratives related to the Shiite religion (See Table 3). Although the origin of Shia narratives is not limited to a specific geography and exists among Shiites of different nations, according to the topics used in this Falnama, it can be said that many of these religious stories are taken from books that were produced in Iran. Samples of these religious books include Kashfi's *Rozah al-Shohda* and the works of Mohtsham Kashani, which were also popular in Golconda at that time (Overton, 2020, p. 35). Moreover, due to a large number of Shiite migrations, many oral traditions of Iranian folk culture were also brought to this region, and because of the common Shiite culture between Iranians and Indian Shiites, different illustrated versions found their way to the Deccan, among which were some non-customized versions with popular stories. Most of these manuscripts were depicted in local workshops in cities like Shiraz and are known as commercial versions. In this context, the book *Khavarannameh* of Ibn Hessam is the most famous for the illustration of a painter named Farhad (Pakbaz, 2001, p. 77). In general, according to stories such as pious Barsisa, Sheikh Karkhi in the shrine of Imam Reza (AS), Zainab Kazaba (fake), and the halving of Mareh in Najaf, it can be said that folk religious culture is one of the dominant aspects of the discourses governing the literature and content of this Falnama. The other side shows the influence of Iranian Shiite culture and its institutionalization in the context of the Shiite culture of the Qutb Shahi court.

Table 3. Paintings with Shiite themes. Source: Authors.

No	Title of Painting	No	Title of Painting
1	Kawsar's butler	6	The killing of an enslaved person by Imam Ali (AS)
2	The battle between Christ and Antichrist in the presence of Imam Mahdi (AS)	7	Sheikh Karkhi in the shrine of Imam Reza (AS)
3	Zainab Kazaba (fake) being swallowed by two lions	8	Halving Mareh in Najaf
4	The rescue of Salman Farsi from the lion by Imam Ali (AS)	9	The Battle of Khaybar
5	Five people of Al Abba		

4. Literary Themes: Another category of paintings in this manuscript includes literary themes that can show the interest of the Deccan kings in literature and even the ancient history of Iran. This category of paintings is the narrators of literary and historical stories, which can be traced especially in the *Khamsa* of Nizami (See Table 4). For example, in the paintings related to Khosrow and Shirin (See Figure 3), Layla and Majnun, and Alexander (Iskandar), the influence of *Khamsa* of Nizami can be seen. The importance of these paintings in this Falnama can be the continuity of the nostalgic memory that has frequently

existed in the culture and art of Iran and that links with the memory of ancient Iran. It is something that has always connected different cultural and historical periods of Iran in the context of the Persian language, like a rosary string. The desire for ancient Iranian culture was one of the other features seen both in Golkonda Falnameh and in other literary works of this era, including Ferdowsi's Shahnameh (Flatt, 2019, p. 192).

Table 4. Paintings with literary themes. Source: Authors.

No	Title of Painting	No	Title of Painting
1	The meeting of Alexander and Plato	6	Shirin and Khosrow, Hunting
2	Death of Alexander	7	Alexander and the wise old man
3	Ahmad Jam taking a ride from the lion	8	The killing of Khosrow Parviz
4	Majnun fainting in front of Layla	9	Fairy king in the apocalyptic paradise
5	Khizr the prophet and Elias take Alexander to the darkness in search of the water of life		

5. Historical themes: If we consider the religious narratives from this Falnama as a separate collection, there is one painting in this manuscript that is somewhat different from other images; An important painting that can be interpreted as a perfect example of a lead-follower relationship between the Qutb Shahids and the Safavids. This painting, entitled the plan of Shah Tahmasp and fighting with the army of Ghanim (See Figure 4), in a way, tries to portray a mythical face of Shiite heroism. In this painting, Shah Tahmasp is depicted riding a horse with two horse-riding attendants, one holding a flag and the other holding a parasol over his head. In front of Shah Tahmasp are soldiers with their hands tied and looking at his command with their heartsick faces. From the middle of the image to the bottom, the army of Shah Tahmasp is destroying the enemy army, and on top of the mountains, a group is beating drums and playing trumpets and Serenas as if they are singing the victory song of Shah Tahmasp, or in better words, the victory of Shiism. The text on the opposite page of this painting promises a pleasant omen, which gives the good news of the end of the distress of the reader's fortune; A link between prosperity and Shiism, which can be interpreted as a kind of political compatibility between Safavid Iran and Qutb Shahids of Deccan. An image specific to Shah Tahmasp can be due to his critical role in establishing Shiism in Iran. He always took the side of Shia scholars and made a lot of effort to spread Shia jurisprudence, and he had great prestige and respect during the Safavid era. During his time, the presence of jurists in his court intensified, and by bringing jurists from two essential centers of Shiism, namely the shores of the Persian Gulf and Jabal Amal, in the 10th century A.H./16th A.D., he strengthened Shiism jurisprudence in Iran (Asar Kashani, 2014, p. 39). Beyond this, Shah Tahmasp was considered a kind of holy character in his time; he considered himself the guardian of Hazrat Ali (AS), who called him "son" in his dream (Parsadoust, 1996, p. 820). Belief in his spiritual status had reached the point where the sick and needy asked for help from God through his name, and some would kiss the doors of the government house in Qazvin, hoping to answer their needs and always carry a piece of his tunic or shawl for blessing or protection from the evil eye (Taheri, 2014, p. 254). He also had a perfect credit among Qutb Shahids, Ibrahim Qutb Shah corresponded with him, and in the book entitled "Burhan Ma'ahir", which deals with the history of Qutb Shahids, he is described with these qualities: "originated from the land of the holy prophet (PBUH), promoter of the right religion of the Twelver Shi'ism, the sincere servant of Imam Ali (AS), Shah Tahmasp Hosseini Safavi" (Tabataba, 2017, p. 255). On the other hand, the tradition of Falnama writing and its spread among other lands was also linked mainly to

Shah Tahmasp's interest in fortune-telling; So in the studies about horology in the Safavid era, his role and interest in divination are considered essential (Farhad & Bagci, 2009, P.23). Therefore, this painting can be regarded as a perfect tribute to the Safavids and an image of the ideal Qutb Shahi Sultans. The image of Shah Tahmasp, in the form of a representative of an influential Shiite government, shows the allegiance of the Qutb Shahi kings to their powerful Safavid neighbor.

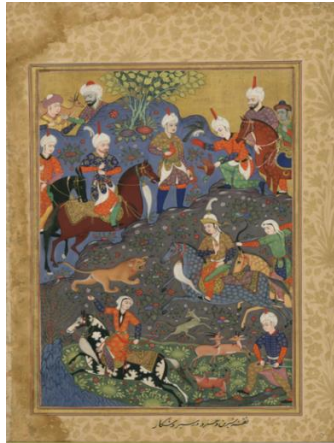


Figure 3. Shirin and Khosrow in hunting, Golconda Falnameh, (around 1019-1039 AH/1630-1610 AD). Nasser Khalili collection. Source: <https://khalilicollections.org>.



Figure 4. Shah Tahmasp and fighting with the army of Ghanim, Golconda Falnameh, (about 1019-1039 AH/ 1630-1610 AD). Nasser Khalili collection. Source: Parikh, 2020, p. 245.

Conclusion

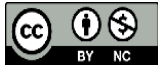
According to the evidence, it is clear that the foundation of Islamic arts in the Deccan is mainly indebted to Iranian aesthetic traditions. It significantly increased in this land from the Timurid era onwards. The spread of the Persian language in Deccan made this land one of the cultural centers of the Persian language, and as a result, the influence of cultural elements in this land increased. With the emergence of the Safavid dynasty and the officialization of Shiism in Iran, a group of Deccan sultans also paved the way for the entry of the cultural foundations of Shiite Iran into this land by accepting Shiism as the official religion and uniting with the Safavids. In the meantime, the Qutb Shahids of Deccan were among the most important allies of the Safavids. As a result, Deccan was in a situation where it accepted Iran and Iranian culture in different forms. Khalili Falnama is an example of the art of this era. In terms of style, Qutb Shahi's art is influenced by Iranian patterns. Equally, cultural foundations are influenced by the typical patterns of Safavid Shiite culture. Exploring the themes of Golconda Falnama paintings shows how a mixture of different foundations of Safavid Iranian culture found its way to the court and context of Qutb Shahi Shiite society. So that Golconda Falnama is a collection by itself that includes different types and ranges of themes gathered in one work; From the religious and ideological foundations of Shiism to the literary and cultural history of Iran, as well as the narratives of the ancient history of Iran, and of course, the contemporary history of the time of Qutb Shahids. The dominant feature of this Falnama is history, taken from the selected texts of Shiism and Iranian literature. Despite this, in a painting of the battle of Shah Tahmasp with the Ghanim regiment and attention to Shah Tahmasp, apart from the cultural proximity

between these two geographical territories, it is also possible to understand the importance of the Safavid kings among the Qutb Shahids. Dealing with the authentic stories of the Iranian world, such as Khamsa of Nizami or the narrative of contemporary history, shows Qutb Shahid's desire to be culturally and even politically close to Iran; As a result, it is possible to analyze a meaningful cultural chain between Qutb Shahids and their interest in Iran. Khalili Falnama represents an integral part of the cultural exchange of Shiism. The amount of attention paid to the elements of Iranian culture in it is such that regardless of the stylistic differences that can be seen in the illustrations and the construction of the copy, it can testify to the possible presence of Iranian artists in the court of Qutb Shahids. Therefore, Khalili Falnameh can be considered the trustee of Iran's cultural traditions in the heart of the subcontinent and Deccan land.

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