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PERSIAN SWORDMAKERS

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Introduction

Similar to high quality Japanese Nihonto swords that are signed with their maker's mark, some high quality Persian swords also bear their maker's mark in the form of a gold-inlaid cartouche on the blade. However, most Persian swords are signed on the blades unlike the Japanese swords, which are signed on the tang. Nevertheless, some high quality Persian swords are also signed on their tangs. Unfortunately as Persian swords cannot be disassembled easily as is the case in Japanese Nihonto, many researchers and museum curators are not aware of this fact. Disassembling the handle of a Persian sword would automatically lead to the destruction of its handle slabs as they are glued to the tang.

The objective of this article is to introduce some famed Persian swordmakers and their work. The first part of the article deals with the legendary Persian swordsmith

Assadollāh. The second part introduces Kalbeali. The last part of the article discusses some Persian swordmakers whose works are kept in the military museums of Iran.

The swordmaker Assadollāh Esfahāni اصفهانی اسدالله

The aura of mystery which surrounds the name of some makers of Nihonto swords such as swords by the legendary Masamune can also be found in Persian blades signed with the name of Assadollāh Esfahāni اصفهانی اسدالله. These swords are generally gold-inlaid with the following phrase: *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل that translates into “The work of Assadollāh Esfahāni” and obviously/allegedly reveals a maker’s mark. One factor that needs to be taken into consideration is that Assadollāh is a name even used in today’s Iran and it literally means “The lion of God” that was/is used as a title of the first Imam of the Shiites (Hazrat-e Ali) and the fourth Caliph of the Sunnites. Thus the phrase *amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* actually can be explained as follows: *amal* (n) means “work,” *Assadollāh* اسدالله (n) means “the lion of God,” and *Esfahāni* اصفهانی (adj) means “from Esfahān”. This maker’s mark appears on a number of high quality Persian swords. Other variants of this signature also exist as *Amal-e Assadollāh* اسدالله عمل (The work of Assadollāh), *Amal-e Assad Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسد عمل (the work of Assad Esfahāni), and *Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله (Assadollāh Esfahāni)¹.

Among Iranian smiths, Assadollāh Esfahāni is supposedly the most famous Iranian swordmaker, but although the blades signed with his name are numerous², his history remains mysterious³. It is even claimed that Assadollāh Esfahāni was a genius in making

¹ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:156–163).

² See Mayer (1957–59:1).

³ See Kobylnski 2000:61).

swords and that *Assadollāh*'s blades are able to shave hair as well as cut iron bars⁴. They are reputedly still in excellent condition today even after 400 years. The gold-inlaid mark *Amal-e Assad Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل or *Amal-e *Assadollāh* Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل was generally accompanied by another phrase, reading *Bande-ye šāh-e velāyat Abbās* عباس ولایت شاه بنده that literally means, “The subject/ slave of the kingdom/ dominion/trusteeship of Ali, *Abbās*.” This translates into the following: “*Abbās* is the representative of Ali’s rule and acts on his behalf.” Note that *bande* (n) means “slave/subject,” *šāh* (n) means “king,” and *velāyat* (n) means “country, trusteeship,” and *Abbās* عباس (n) is a king’s name.

According to the Digital Lexicon of *Dehxodā*, *bande* بنده means “subject” or “slave.” Obviously, people who serve or inhabit the realm ruled by a king are his subjects. *Velāyat* ولایت means “kingdom” or “ruled land”; therefore, a king has a *velāyat* to rule. *Dehxodā* further states that the person to whom *Velāyat-e Ali*⁵ على ولایت relates considers himself the representative of *Emām Ali* على امام and, consequently, rules and governs on his behalf. It is clear that this is very much a Shiite phrase, for the Shiites consider *Hazrat-e Ali* على حضرت the true heir to the Prophet Mohammad. Further, the *Digital Lexicon of Dehxodā* also tells us that there were different titles/names used to refer to *Hazrat-e Ali*. These include *amir al-momenin* امیرالمؤمنین, *Assadollāh*, *اسدالله*, *Heidar*, *molāye motagiyān* متقیان ملای, *šāh-e mardān* شاه مردان, and *šāh-e velāyat* ولایت شاه. Thus, *šāh-e velāyat* ولایت شاه (the king of the land) refers to *Hazrat-e Ali* as can be seen in old manuscripts, such as *Futuvvatnāme-ye Soltāni*⁶. In the Qājār-period

⁴ See *Mir'i* (1970/1349:336).

⁵ For the usage of this phrase in the same context see the manuscript *Abu Moslemnāme* (Tartusi, 2001/1380:401; vol. 2).

⁶ See *Kāšefi Sabzevāri* (1971/1350:6, 10)

manuscript *Rostam al Tavārix*, a story is related about how Šāh Esmā'il killed a bear when he was thirteen years old and also killed a lion while hunting when he was in Iraq, stating that Šāh Esmā'il inherited the bravery of *hazrat-e šāh-e velāyat* ولايت شاه حضرت (referring to Hazrat-e Ali). Further, one should notice that in the manuscript *Ta'id Besārat*, it is reported that the period of the rule of a king *asr-e pādešāh* پادشاه عصر is written on some swords⁷. Thus, many researchers have assumed that the combination of two phrases *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل and *Bande-ye šāh-e velāyat Abbās* عباس ولايت شاه بنده indicate that the famed swordmaker Assadollāh Esfahāni should have lived during the period of Šāh Abbās Safavid. But no clear historical evidence could be provided to substantiate this claim. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that historical evidence for the existence of other artists in other fields in historical chronicles, such as the calligrapher Mir Emād, the painter Rezā Abbāsi Kāšāni, astronomer Molānā Jalāledin Mohammad Yazdi, the physician Hakim Šafāi Esfahāni, the musician Masib Xān, the carpet maker Nematollāh Jošqāni, and the architect Ostād Ali Akbar Esfahāni, just to name a few, are clearly mentioned⁸. But all these manuscripts are silent on the existence of a swordsmith named Assadollāh Esfahāni. As far as my research shows three manuscripts in Persian mention the name of Assad as a swordmaker as will be described in the following.

In the Safavid-period manuscript *Tazakore-ye Nasrābādi*⁹, it is reported that a master swordmaker named *Ostād Kalbeali*, was talking about his father Assad اسد:

⁷ See Mirzā Lotfallāh (1706–1707:1118 or 1108:1696–1697:[8]).

⁸ See Mir'i (1970/1349:305–336).

⁹ See Nasrābādi Esfahāni (1941/1317:9).

می‌کرد نقل اسد خود والد از شمشیرگر کلبعی استاد.

Ostād Kalbeali šamširgar az vāled xod ostād Assad naql mikard.

[Master Kalbeali the swordmaker was talking about his father master Assad].

One should note that Mirzā Mohammad Tāher Nasrābādi Esfahāni was born in 1027 Hegira (1619 C.E.) and started to write the book *Tazakore-ye Nasrābādi* in 1083 Hegira (1672 C.E.) and lived until the end of the rule of Šāh Soleymān Safavid [Šāh Soleymān Safavid ruled from 1052–1077 Hegira/1666–1694 C.E.]¹⁰. Another mention of the name Assad اسد as a swordmaker can be found in the manuscript *Ta'id Besārat* written by Mirzā Lotfallāh in Persian in India. The date of completion is contained in the book: if the Yāi hamzatum is counted, as it is usually in such treatises, a most likely year would be 1118 Hegira (1706–1707 C.E.) and without Yā it would be 1108 Hegira (1696–1697 C.E.). If one takes both dates of completion into consideration, namely 1706-1707 C.E. and 1696-1697 C.E., it is clear that the manuscript *Ta'id Besārat* was written during the rule of Šāh Soltān Hossein Safavid (1694–1722 C.E.). In the manuscript *Ta'id Besārat*, Mirzā Lotfallāh explains that the Iranian sword is called *ikeri* ایکری by the Turks and is made in Esfahān (Isfahan) especially by Assad اسد, who, he says, is like the Sāleh صالح from India, and his son Kalbeali کلبعی. The Iranian swords [made by Assad اسد and Kalbeali کلبعی and other Iranian smiths] cut *jošan* جوشن armor very well, and Mirzā Lotfallāh explains that if he were to report all of the good qualities of Iranian swords according to what he had seen and heard it would seem like an exaggeration. The text reads in original as follows:

پرسش و هندوستانست صالح مثل که اسد کار خصوص صفاهانیست گویند ایکری ترکان که ایرانی شمشیر

¹⁰ Allan and Gilmour (2000:102) report about the mention of the name of a swordsmith named Assad.

سختبری در شود مبالغه مجملاً کنم تفصیل او شنیده و دیده برش اگر می‌برد بسیار جوشن غیره و کلب‌علی
دم طرف نصف و است فولاد شمشیر زرهبری و می‌برد خوب امکان بقدر زره است هم‌بر آنکه با است بی‌نظیر
و می‌خورد خم ضرب شدت در دیگر اجزای با صابون و عصاره روغن از است دهنیت به آبداریش است آبدار
و خراسانی از بهتر اصفهانی میدارند نگاه تمام بندوق مبصران می‌ماند قایم اکثر هم دم بر نمی‌شکند هرگز
در چند هر اصیل قبیل از است فولاد کیفیت و نرمی نقش تا ولایتی شناخت است ولایت دیگر جاهای و قمی
شد انقدر نمی‌تواند هم برش در و ساخت نمی‌تواند کیفیت بان هندوستان در می‌رسد هند از فولاد ولایت.

(Mirzā Lotfallāh, 1706–1707:1118 or 1108:1696–1697:[36-37])

*Šamšir-e irāni ke torkān ikeri guyand safāhānist xosus kār-e Asad ke mel-e Sāleh-e
hendustān ast va pesaraš Kalb-e Ali va qeire jōšan besyār miborad agar boreš dide va
šenide u tafsil konam mojamelan mobāleqe šavad dar saxtbori binazir ast bā inke
hamebor ast zereh beqadr-e emkān xub miborad va zerehbori šamšir-e fulād ast va nesf-
e taraf-e dam ābdār ast ābdāriyaš be dohniyat ast az roqan-e osāre va sābun bā ajzāye
digar dar šedat-e zarb xam mixorad va hargez nemišekanad bar dam ham aksar qāyem
mimānad mobserān be zoq-e tamām negāh midārand esfahāni behtar az xorāsāni va
qomi va jāhāye digar-e velāyat ast šenāxt velāyati tā naqlaš narmi va keyfiyat fulād ast
az qabil-e asil har čand dar velāyat fulād az hend miresad dar hendustān be ān keyfiyat
nemitavānand sāxt va dar boreš ham ānqadr nemitavānand šod.*

[Iranian sword, which is called *ikeri* by the Turks, is from Isfahan, especially those made by Assad, who is similar to Sāleh from India, and his son Kalb-e Ali and others. It cuts *jōšan* [a type of armor which is a combination of plate and mail] very well. If I explained its cutting [ability] which I have seen and heard it would sound like an exaggeration. It is

the best in cutting hard objects. Although it cuts everything it cuts mail armor well as far as possible. Cutting mail armor is due to the steel sword. Half of the side of the sword towards the edge is hardened. And its hardening is due to oiliness/flexibility which is done in oil essence and soap and other ingredients. Upon hard strikes it bends, but it never breaks. It keeps its strong edge most of the time as well. [Sword] connoisseurs keep it with lots of interests. Swords from Esfahān [Isfahan] are better than those from Xorāsān [Khorasan] and Qom and other places in the country [*velāyat*]. Recognizing the swords from the country [*velāyat*; referring to Iran here] as they explain is due to its flexibility and the quality of its steel similar to *asil* [noble] swords. Although the steel of the country [*velāyat*] comes from India, In India they cannot make the same quality [swords] and they cannot reach their cutting ability].

This again proves that that there was not only one smith called Assadollāh who lived during the reign of Šāh Abbās Safavid who ruled from 1587–1629 C.E. In the *Dāeratolmaāref-e Bozorg-e Eslāmi* (The Great Islamic Encyclopaedia), Semsār¹¹ wrongly assumes that the first time the name of the smith Assadollāh was mentioned was in the *Jogrāfiyā-ye Esfahān* (The Geography of Esfahān) which was written in 1294 Hegira (1877 C.E.). In the manuscript *Jogrāfiyā-ye Esfahān* the name of Assad Esfahāni is mentioned as follows¹²:

شمشیر بود شده پیدا شخصی مدت جاوید دولت این اوایل . کم بسیار حالا و بودند زیاد سابق . شمشیرساز جماعت این بنکرد هم دوام نداشت مشوق و مشتری چون هندوستان کارهای و اصفهانی اسد از بهتر بمراتب میساخت

¹¹ See Semsār (1997/1377:257).

¹² Tahvildār Esfahāni (1964/1342:107).

است خریدار کم بسیار متاعشان الان باشد داشته خواهان اگر میسازند خوب هم زمان .

Jemā'at šamširsāz. Sābeq ziyād budand va hālā besyār kam. Avāyel in dolat-e jāvid moddat yek šaxsi peydā šode bud šamšir misāxt be marāteb behtar as Assad Esfahāni va kārhāye hendustān. Čon moštari va mošaveq nadāšt davām ham peidā nakard. In zamān ham xub misāzand aqar xāhān dāšte bāšad, allān matā'ešān besyār kam xaridār ast.

[Swordmakers: There used to be many in the past but they are only few now. At the beginning of this “eternal government” [referring to the period of Nassereldin Šāh Qājār], there was a person [smith] who made better swords than Assad Esfahāni and the [other] swords made in India. He [the swordsmith] did not have any supporters and clients, his work did not survive. But, they can still make good swords if there are clients, although there is not enough demand from buyers to commission swords].

As shown before, the assumption of Semsār is not correct as the name of Assadollāh was already mentioned in the manuscripts *Tazakore-ye Nasrābādi* and *Ta'id Besārat*. But as it is clear from all three manuscripts, reference to Assad is anectodal. It is noteworthy that all manuscripts refer to him as Assad and not Assadollāh and only one manuscript uses the last name Esfahāni.

The problem of the existence of a large number of swords signed with the signature of Assadollah was already recognized by early research that assumed that some of these

cartouches were added later to the blades to increase their value for sale to the European markets¹³. Research in 2000 assumed that there were more than 200 blades bearing the signature of Assadollāh Esfahāni in larger, [known] private collections and museums outside Iran and the same number could presumably be found in smaller collections, raising the number to at least 400 to 500 swords carrying his signature; it is highly unlikely that Assadollāh made all these blades¹⁴. Additionally, many of his blades outside Iran are dated, the oldest known date being 811 hegira (1409 C.E.), while the most recent one is 1223 Hegira (1808 C.E.)¹⁵. Other researchers provide a time span of over three centuries for dated blades carrying the signature of Assadollāh¹⁶. Another factor to be taken into consideration is that the style of calligraphy and handwriting are often very different from one blade to another, making it impossible for all these blades to have been crafted by one swordmaker. Additionally, the techniques of making these signatures vary drastically as does the handwriting¹⁷.

Next to the association of Assadollāh with the era of Šāh Abbās the Great (1585–1627 C.E.), there are also suggestions that that since many blades carrying the signature of Assadollāh were made after the era of Šāh Abbās the Great, Assadollāh presumably lived in the era of Šāh Abbās III (1731–36 C.E.). Nevertheless, research points out to the existence of a blade signed with the signature “The work of Kalb Ali, the son of Assadollāh” in the 17th century, indicating that a certain smith named Assadollāh must have lived during the era of Šāh Abbās the Great¹⁸.

¹³ See Zeller and Rohrer (1955:98-99).

¹⁴ Kobylinski (2000:61); also see Mayer (1957–59:1).

¹⁵ Kobylinski (2000:62).

¹⁶ See Lebedynsky (1992:71).

¹⁷ Lebedynsky (1992:71) and Kobylinski (2000:62).

¹⁸ See Zeller and Rohrer (1955:100).

Just in the collection of Henri Moser in Bern, Switzerland, there are 13 Persian blades signed with the signature of Assadollah spanning a time span of 140 years, including the kingdoms of 4 successive Iranian kings from the Safavid period¹⁹. In the collection of Henri Moser in Bern, there are no blades signed with the signature of Assadollāh that can be traced to the era of Šāh Abbās²⁰. However, in the Military Museum of Tehran alone, the Palace of Sa'dābād, there are four swords attributed to Šāh Abbās I that are signed with the signature of Assadollāh Esfahāni. Another magnificent dated sword from the Military Museum Bandar Anzali (number 6) with the cartouche *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni 107* is clearly dated to 1107 hegira, which was made during the reign of Šāh Abbās I Safavid, who ruled from 996–1038 Hegira (1587–1629 C.E.).

There are also suggestions that the signature of Assadollāh may have been used as a sign of a workshop²¹. On the one hand, there are no signs of such a workshop in Iranian chronicles; on the other hand, one should reject the possibility that these blades are counterfeit since a counterfeiter would have copied the exact cartouche instead of creating new styles. Further, due to the fact that the dates on these blades vary dramatically from one to the other and encompass a wide range, a counterfeiter would have also included the exact date of the reign of Šāh Abbās rather than inventing different, unrelated dates. It is not even clear which Šāh Abbās is actually referred to since there were three kings by that name: Šāh Abbās I (1585–1627 C.E.), Šāh Abbās II (1642–1667 C.E.), and Šāh Abbās III (1732–1736 C.E.)²². The dates on the blades signed

¹⁹ See Zeller and Rohrer (1955:99–100).

²⁰ See Zeller and Rohrer (1955:100).

²¹ See Kobylinski (2000:62).

²² See Mayer (1957–59:1).

with the name of Assadollāh kept in European museums range from 1408–1409 C.E.²³ until 1808 C.E.²⁴ and the cartouches carry the names of almost all Safavid kings, such as Šāh Esmāil, Šāh Tahmāsp, Šāh Abbās, Šāh Safi, Šāh Hossein, Šāh Soleymān, and even Afšārid Nāder Shah²⁵. Research also suggests the theory that the name of Assadollāh was used in his workshop so that the swords could continue to be made under the name of the master²⁶. However, in the same research it is stressed that two sons of Assadollāh signed their blades with their own names and it is concluded that the very name of Assadollāh was used as a sign of quality and excellence after his death²⁷.

Dated swords with this maker's mark complicate the issue even more. There are seven dated examples that, rather than solving the mystery behind the smith Assadollāh's life, only complicate the matter as the time span over which these swords are purported to have been constructed is too long for a normal human life, let alone the active life of a smith. Among the swords discussed in the book *Arms and Armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period*, the earliest date is 992 Hegira (1583 C.E.), and the latest is 1135 Hegira (1722 C.E.), a time span of 139 years²⁸. Even the positioning of the individual words in this phrase varies from sword to sword. Taking all these factors into consideration, it seems unlikely or even fundamentally implausible that a single smith named Assadollāh produced all these blades. It seems feasible and probable that “Assadollāh” اسدالله was a title of honor signifying the highest level of mastery in swordmaking. The theory that some of these inscriptions were counterfeited to add to the

²³ This saber is in the Royal Scottish Museum.

²⁴ This saber is in the Wallace Collection in London.

²⁵ See Mayer (1957–59:2).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:156–163).

value of a sword may be true of later swords bearing cartouches where one finds poorly executed inlayings or even overlayings, but all examples presented in the book mentioned above have inscriptions with finely executed calligraphy and workmanship and exhibit outstanding inlaying techniques. If one assumes that the name “Assadollāh” اسدالله was the highest title given to an Iranian smith who had attained a very high level of mastery in making swords, the mystery of the existence of a variety of handwriting and calligraphy styles over a long period of time appears to be solved. A person counterfeiting a fraudulent cartouche would most likely imitate the original as precisely as possible in order to deceive buyers since he attempted to sell his swords under a fake name. Additionally, a counterfeiter would surely have ensured that the date on forged cartouches exactly matched the era of Šāh Abbās Safavid if there were only one famous smith named Assadollāh during the relevant period. Another fact reinforcing the hypothesis that “Assadollāh” اسدالله was presumably an honorary title bestowed during the Safavid period is that there are three dated swords bearing the phrase of *Amal-e Assdollah Esfahāni* from the same time period, namely *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni 116* (۱۱۶ اصفهانی اسدالله عمل), *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni 117* (۱۱۷ اصفهانی اسدالله عمل), and *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* (اصفهانی اسدالله عمل) and *Bande-ye Šah-e velāyat Abbās saneye 135* (۱۳۵ سنہ عباس ولایت شاہ بندہ)²⁹, all originating during the period of Šāh Soltān Hossein Safavid, who ruled from 1105–1135 Hegira (1694–1722 C.E.). However, all three swords look different in many respects, especially regarding the handwriting style. This is further evidence that, at least during the period of Šāh Soltān Hossein Safavid’s reign, various smiths signed blades using the signature *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* (اصفهانی اسدالله عمل) and further corroborates the theory that Assadollāh اسدالله was, indeed,

²⁹ Ibid.

an honorary title. We should not forget, however, that making a *šamšir* شمشير involved a large number of different individuals exhibiting diverse skills so that a number of different people were involved in making the various parts of a sword. One of these groups was called *fulādgarān* فولادگران (steel workers). In the manuscript *Jogrāfiyā-ye Esfahān* it is stated that the *fulādgarān* فولادگران made the sword fittings³⁰. This is also reported that the *fulādkārān* فولادکاران in the Safavid era used steel for fretwork, for decoration purposes on helmets, shields, and penholders, and for inscriptions on doors and windows. Calligraphers aided them in the design of inscriptions on *gol-e kamar* گلکمر (belt buckles). Additionally, Safavid steelworkers, specialized in making arms and armor, cooperated with *zargarān* زرگران (goldsmiths) when decorating them³¹. This was obviously the case in later periods as well. Floor (2003:223) quotes Tahvildār, who wrote about the gold engravers (*naqqāš-e zargar* نقاش زرگر) guild that engraved and inlaid ivory bones and lion fish-teeth (walrus ivory) for the grips of daggers (*xanjar* خنجر), mirror framers, walking-stick handles, and chess pieces. Clearly, calligraphers and goldsmiths were also involved in the writing and decoration of sword fittings. One could theorize that one of the reasons behind the existence of various handwritings of a maker's mark could be due to this division of labor. From Nasrābādi Esfahāni's writings, the smith Assadollāh lived circa 1690 C.E. within the reign of Šāh Soleymān Safavid, who ruled from 1077–1105 Hegira (1666–1694 C.E.). There is an Iranian *šamšir* with two gold-inlaid inscriptions: *Amal-e Assadollāh* اسدالله عمل (The work of Assadollāh) and *Šāhanšah Anbiyā Mohammad* محمد انبیا شاهنشه (The king of the prophets Mohammad)³². The swords and coins during the Mohammad Šāh Qājār period also carried

³⁰ See Tahvildār Esfahāni (1964/1342:106).

³¹ Ehsāni (2003/1382:195)

³² See Petrasch, et al. (1991:182; 185–186).

the inscription of *Šahanšah Anbiyā Mohammad* محمد انبیا شاهنشه. Both cartouches on this *šamšir* شمشیر have the same style of handwriting and gold-inlaying technique, which would indicate that they originate from the same period, which was in this case the era of Mohammad Šāh Qājār. It would therefore appear that a smith by the name of Assadollāh also lived during the era of Mohammad Šāh Qājār [1834–1848 C.E.] as well as during that of Šāh Soleymān Safavid (1666–1694 C.E.)³³. Based on all the facts presented above, it is reasonable to assume that Assadollāh was a title of mastery given to the best sword smiths who were consequently allowed to mark their swords or products with the prestigious phrase, *Amal-e Assadollāh* اسدالله عمل or *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل. This would make perfect sense as Assadollāh اسدالله (Lion of God) was the title of Emām Ali and, thus, a title of great respect in a highly religious Shiite society such as that of Safavid Iran. This would also explain why the name Assadollāh اسدالله was not put on *kārdhā* (knives) and *xanjarhā* (daggers). Making edged weapons was an operation that involved a great deal of division of labour in Iran; the group who crafted swords was called *šamširsāz* شمشیرساز, and as the swordmaking industry was at its peak and deeply appreciated and admired, it is no surprise that this title was given to the best swordmakers. An anecdote from *Dāstān Hossein Kord Šabestari*, written during Šāh Abbās Safavid's reign, reveals that even Šāh Abbās Safavid was called “The descendant of Assadollāh.” The book relates that when the son of Badaq Xān, the governor of Tabriz, sent a messenger to Šāh Abbās in Esfahān, the messenger entered the court and addressed Šāh Abbās as *farzandzāde-ye Assadollāh al-qāleb amir al-momenin aleyhe salām* (عليه السلام اميرالمؤمنين الغالب اسدالله فرزندزاده) (The descendant of the Lion of God,

³³ See Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:156–163).

Assadollāh, the powerful/ victorious Ruler of the Believers)³⁴. In the Qājār-period manuscript, *Rostam al Tavārix*, the following title is used to refer to Hazrat Ali: *Assadollāh al Qāleb Ali ibn Abi Tāleb* (ع) ابیطالب ابن علی الغالب اسدالله (The Lion of God Ali, the powerful the victorious, the son of Abi Tāleb)³⁵. Both Assadollāh and *amir al-momenin* امیرالمؤمنین are the titles of Hazrat Ali. Now, given the fact that Šāh Abbās Safavid called himself "Kalbeali" كلبعلی (the dog of Ali) and the descendant of Assadollāh, it sheds light on the phrase, *Amal-e Kalbali ibn Assad[ollah] Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسد ابن كلبعلی عمل. It is possible that being ranked as Assadollāh اسدالله was higher than the rank of Kalbeali. This hypothesis is also supported by the strict nature of the guilds during the Safavid period. Reaching the level of mastery in any guild probably required arduous examinations. There is a possibility that mastership in a guild under the Safavids and up to the Qājār period was subject to some sort of qualifying examination, such that a candidate may have been required to present a fine piece of his work for examination and judgment by the masters of the guild³⁶. It could be that achieving the level of mastery in the method of forging swords was rewarded with the title Assadollāh اسدالله (The Lion of God)³⁷. This title was given to good swordsmen as reported in the manuscript *Romuz-e Hamze* written in the second half of the 15th century C.E. that the title *Assad ibn اسد ابن* was used to refer to swordsmen who delivered very powerful strikes with their swords³⁸.

The swordmaker Kalbeali

³⁴ See *Dāstān Hossein Kord Šabestari* (2003/1382:44).

³⁵ See Āsef (2003/1382:134).

³⁶ See Allan and Gilmour (2000:387).

³⁷ For the maker's mark signed with the name Assadollāh and its variants on different swords see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:430, cat.70, 432, cat. 73; 434, cat. 74; 435, cat. 75; 436, cat. 76; 441, cat. 79; 451, cat. 85; 448-449, cat.83; 451, cat.85; 453, cat.86; 456, cat.89; 461, cat.93; 471, cat.103; 481, cat.112; 503, cat.131; 518, cat.143; 526, cat.151; 529, cat.152; 536, cat.157; 547, cat.166).

³⁸ See *Romuz-e Hamze* (1940/1359 Hegira:539).

Another swordmaker's cartouche that has led to lots of confusion is the phrase *Amal-e Kalbeali* کلبعلى عمل “The work of Kalbeali.” Note that *amal* (n) means “work,” *kalb* كلب (n) means “dog,” and *Ali* (n) is the name of Hazrat-e Ali. Similar to the name *Assadollāh* اسدالله, Kalbeali is a characteristic Shiite first name and Kalbeali is also considered as another smith who worked for Šāh Abbās Safavid, who ruled from 1587–1629 C.E., by some researchers³⁹. The expression “The dog of Ali” is used to show the devotion of the maker to Hazrat Ali, على حضرت علي, the first Emām of the Shiites. This maker's mark is also a mystery as different swords with different handwriting and calligraphy with this maker's mark exist. The existence of different phrases of the signature of “*Kalbeali*” indicates that there were, indeed, different smiths who signed their swords with this title. There are three different types: a) *amal-e Kalbali* کلبعلى عمل, b) *amale-e Kalbeali Esfahāni* اصفهانی کلبعلى عمل, and c) *amal-e Kalb-e Ali ibn Assad-e Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسد ابن کلبعلى عمل. The name “*Kalbeali*” is sometimes written as one word as کلبعلى, and it is written in two words on other cartouches as well as على كلب. Even the reference to the father, *Assadollāh*, is different. One cartouche bears the expression, *Ibn Assad Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسد ابن, whereas another cartouche reads, *Ibn Assad Zahābdār* دار زهاب اسد ابن زهابدار اسد ابن. The inscription, *Valad-e Kalbeali ibn Assad Zahābdār* کلبعلى ولد, reveals that the smith wanted to stress that his grandfather had the title “*Assadollāh*” اسدالله, the highest level, or wanted to stress that he was a *seyyed* (descendant of the Prophet Mohammad's family)⁴⁰. Assuming that *Assadollāh* was an honorary title, one is faced with the problem of interpreting the phrase *Amal-e Kalbeali ebn Assad* اسد ابن کلبعلى عمل (The work of Kalbeali the son of Assad). In this

³⁹ See Lebedinsky (1992:71).

⁴⁰ See Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:163–167).

regard, it is assumed that there were two sons of *Assadollāh*, *Kalbeali* and *Esmā'il* اسماعیل and is assumed that only one blade is signed “The work of *Esmā'il* son of *Assadollāh*”⁴¹. Despite the fact that there are many swords signed with the name of *Esmā'il*, one cannot conclude that these were blades made by *Esmā'il*, the son of *Assadollāh*, given that *Esmā'il* was a very popular name during the Safavid period.

Some researchers assume that since some cartouches bear the signature “*Kalbeali*, the son of *Assadollāh*,” this is an indication that *Assadollāh* was a living person⁴² as at the end of 16th century and the beginning of 17th century, *Assadollāh Esfahāni* had attained a very good reputation. Some even propose the possibility that *Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله was the creator of the classical Iranian *šamšir* with the highly curved blade, a tradition that was set forth after his death and the death of his son, *Kalbeali* کلبعالی⁴³. However, the theory cannot be substantiated that one smith named *Assadollāh* اسدالله from the Šāh Abbās شاه عباس period was the inventor of this type of sword. One should note that prior to the Arab Conquest of Iran and the introduction of Islam in 631 C.E., the swords used in Iran were all straight-bladed. This means that the preceding Persian dynasties, namely the Achaemenians (559 B.C.-330 B.C.), the Parthians (250 B.C.-228 A.D.), and the Sassanians (241 A.D.-651 A.D.) all used double-edged, swords with straight blades. Although the term *šamšir* is used in English and other European languages to refer to the classical Persian *šamšir* with a high degree of curvature, one should note that the term itself is a general one and refers to any type of sword, regardless of its shape, in the Persian language. As a matter of fact, this term has its origin in the

⁴¹ See Mayer (1957-59:2).

⁴² See Kobylinski (2000:62).

⁴³ See Lebedinsky (1992:71).

Middle Persian Pahlavi, in which it was called *šamšēr*, *šafšēr* and *šufšēr* (Farahvashi, 2002b/1381:336). The roots of the word *šamšir* can be traced back to the early New Persian language, before it was written in Arabic script. In early New Persian, “sword” was called *sneh* (*snyh*), or *šamšēr*. The earlier version seems to be *šafšēr* in Manichaen Middle Persian⁴⁴.

These famous names, namely *Assadollāh* and *Kalbeali*, especially the name of *Assadollāh* اسدالله, were used to symbolize the quality of the blades⁴⁵. It is interesting to note that many swords with good watered blades were signed with his name not only in Iran but also in Mogul India and Ottoman Turkey. As suggested in the entry *amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل, the name of *Assadollāh* اسدالله was more likely to have been a title bestowed on the best sword smiths—living people, not to a certain workshop. Assuming that *Assadollāh* was a title of this nature, it may also solve the problem of the name in *Kalbeali Ibn Assadollāh* اسدالله ابن کلبعلی, indicating that the son of a master made this sword. The interesting question that arises here is whether *Kalbeali* کلبعلی (the dog of Ali) was a real name or a title as well. It is important to take into consideration that *Kalbeali* کلبعلی is significantly a Shiite name, expressing humility and devotion towards Ali. Early research already discusses the problem of the identification of blades signed with *Kalbali* کلبعلی and refers to three swords signed with this name, dated from 1681 to 1700 C.E., but the cartouches cover the reigns of *Šāh Esmā’il* اسماعیل شاه, *Šāh Tahmāsp* شاه طهماسب, *Šāh Abbās* شاه عباس, and *Šāh Safi* شاه صفی⁴⁶. But even if these cartouches refer to *Šāh Safi* II (1077–1105 Hegira under the name *Soleymān*),

⁴⁴ See MacKenzie (1971).

⁴⁵ See Lebedinsky (1992:71).

⁴⁶ See Mayer (1957–59:3).

Šāh Tahmāsp II (1135–1144 Hegira), Šāh Abbās III (1144–1163 Hegira), and Šāh Esmā'il III (1163–1166 Hegira), there is a maximum time span of 89 years and a minimum of 84, obviously too long a period for the active life of a sword smith⁴⁷. It is also important to take into consideration that even Šāh Abbās I called himself *Kalbe āstāne Ali* على آستان کلب (dog on the threshold of Ali's house), and some of his contemporary historians, such as Jallāledin Mohammad, exclusively used this title to refer to him⁴⁸. An account verifies that the name of Kalbali كلبعلی was a title used to refer to people of a certain rank and who were *seyyed* (descendants of the Prophet Mohammad's family). This story recalls the encounter between *Pahlavān* Darviš Mofred مفرد درویش پهلوان and an outlaw named Amir Xalil خلیل امیر initially refused to fight Amir Xalil, saying that he belonged to *sagān-e ān āstān* [the dogs of that family: referring to the Prophet Mohammad's family] (note that *sagān ān āstān* is a short form of *sag-e āstān Ali* على آستان سگ or *Kalb-e Ali* على کلب and anyone who fights against a member of their group will lose⁴⁹. This, of course, is more proof that the name of Kalbeali was used to refer to *seyyed* (descendant of the Prophet Mohammad's family) and has nothing to do with a name of only one smith. Therefore, the fact that many smiths used this name on their blades is an indication that either they wanted to signal that they were *seyyed* سید or chose to point out that they reached a certain level of mastery. It is noteworthy that some researchers state that some Iranian swords from the Safavid period bore engraved inscriptions, such as *Kalbe āstāne Ali* على آستان کلب [the dog of the House of Ali], *Kalb āstāne Velāyat* [the dog of the house of the kingdom], or *Navvāb-e Kalbe āstāne Ali* على آستان کلب نواب [the representative of the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Mir'i (1970/1349:229).

⁴⁹ See Kāzemini (1964/1343:78–81).

dog of the house of Ali], by Iranian smiths, proving their devotion to Ali عليه ⁵⁰. It would appear that these expressions refer to the maker's signature, *Amal-e Kalbeali*, كُلْبَعْلَى عَمَل, as none of the expressions mentioned by Falsafi appear word for word on swords from the Safavid period. Thus, it could also be that Kalbeali كُلْبَعْلَى was another title used by Safavid swordsmiths and most probably one level below *Assadollāh* اَسْدَالِلَّهِ, the title of Emām Ali عليه himself. Nevertheless, the possibility cannot be ruled out that there were different smiths named Kalbeali كُلْبَعْلَى whose fathers had reached the mastery level of *Assadollāh* اَسْدَالِلَّهِ. There is also report of a sword signed with the maker's name, *Kalbeali Xorāsāni* خَرَاسَانِي كُلْبَعْلَى, a smith who worked during the reign of Šāh Abbās عَبَّاس شَاه and who made an undated sword that is kept in the Salar Jung Museum in Secunderabad. Based on this assumption, it is safe to assume that other smiths who did not have this level of mastery or did not have a father who had reached the level of mastery attained by *Assadollāh* اَسْدَالِلَّهِ signed their swords with their real names⁵¹.

Other sword makers

It is noteworthy that other swordmakers signed their swords with their own names. Some smiths who have signed their names on the blades are as the following. Beside sword number one that is kept in Reza Abbāsi Museum in Tehrān, all these swords are kept in Iranian military museums (Military Museum of Tehrān, Military Museum of Širāz and Military Museum of Bandar Anzali) and were all part of the private collection of Nassereldin Šāh Qājār who had inherited these swords from his ancestors:

⁵⁰ Falsafi (1996/1375:871; volume 3).

⁵¹ For the maker's mark Kalbeali and its variants on different swords see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:437, cat. 77; 438, cat. 78; 476, cat. 108; 495, cat. 124; 531, cat. 153).

Safavid period

- 1) One of the Safavid-period smiths was named Sādeq who signed his swords with the inscription *amal-e Sādeq* صادق عمل (The work of Sādeq). Note that *amal* (n) means “work” and Sādeq (n) is a name. A sword signed by *amal-e Sādeq* and attributed to Sāh Esmā’il is Safavid and is kept in the Reza Abbāsi Museum⁵².
- 2) Another swordmaker from the Safavid period was called Salmān Qolām who signed his swords with the inscription *amal-e Salmān Qolām* غلام سلمان عمل (The work of Salmān Qolām); note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work” and Salmān Qolām غلام سلمان (n) is a name. A sword signed by *amal-e Salmān Qolām* غلام سلمان عمل and attributed to Sāh Safi Safavid is kept in the Military Museum of Tehrān⁵³.
- 3) Another smith from the Safavid period was Mesri Mo’alam or Mo’alam Mesri who signed his swords with the inscription *Amal-e Mesri Mo’alam* معلم مصرى عمل or *Amal-e Mo’alam Mesri* مصرى معلم عمل (The work of Mesri Mo’alam or the work of Mo’lam Mesri). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work” and *Mesri Mo’alam* مصرى معلم (n) is a name. A sword signed by *amal-e Mesri Mo’alam* معلم مصرى عمل and attributed to Sāh Safi is kept in the Military Museum of Tehrān⁵⁴.
- 4) A Safavid-period smith named Mohammad Taqi Sakkāk signed his swords with the inscription *Amal-e Mohammad Taqi Sakkāk* محمد تقى سکاک عمل (The work of Mohammad Taqi Sakkāk). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work” and Mohammad Taqi Sakkāk is a name. A sword signed by *Amal-e Mohammad Taqi Sakkāk* محمد تقى سکاک عمل and attributed to Sāh Soltān Hossein Safavid is kept in the Military Museum of Tehrān⁵⁵.

⁵² For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:431, cat.72).

⁵³ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:446, cat.81).

⁵⁴ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:444, cat. 80; 538, cat.159).

⁵⁵ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:450, cat.84).

5) Another smith with the name Askari Esfahāni from the Safavid period signed his swords with the inscription *amal-e Askari Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسکری عمل (The work of Askari Esfahāni). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work,” *askari* اسکری (n) is a name, and *Esfahāni* اصفهانی (adj) means “from Esfahān”⁵⁶.

Zand period

1) A very famed smith named Ali Asqar Esfahāni from the Zand period made one of the swords attributed to Karim Xān Zand that is kept in the Military Museum of Tehran. He signed his sword with the inscription *Amal-e Ali Asqar Esfahāni* اصفهانی علی اصغر عمل (The work of Ali Asqar Esfahāni). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work,” Ali Asqar (n) is a name, and *Esfahāni* اصفهانی (adj) means “from Esfahān”⁵⁷.

Qājār period

1) A smith from the Zand period or early Qājār period named Mollā Sādeq Esfahāni signed his swords with the inscriptions *amal-e Mollā Sādeq Esfahāni* اصفهانی صادق ملا عمل (The work of Mollā Sādeq Esfahāni). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work,” Mollā Sādeq ملا (n) is a name, and, *Esfahāni* اصفهانی (adj) means “from Esfahān”⁵⁸.

2) A smith named Mir Rezā from the early Qājār period signed his swords with the inscription *amal-e Mir Rezā* میر رضا عمل (The work of Mir Rezā). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work” and Mir Rezā میر رضا (n) is a name⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:458, cat.91).

⁵⁷ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:494, cat.123).

⁵⁸ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006b:544, cat.164).

⁵⁹ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:524, cat.149).

3) A swordsmith from the Qājār period made two swords for Nassereldin Šāh Qājār with the signature *amal-e Ostād Hāji Mohammad* محمد حاجی استاد عمل (The work of Hāji Mohammad). Note that *amal* (n) means “work,” *ostād* (n) means “master,” and Hāji Mohammad (n) is a name⁶⁰.

4) Another swordsmith from the Qājār period with the name Hāji Kāzem signed his swords with the inscription *amal-e Hāji Kāzem* حاجی‌کاظم عمل (The work of Hāji Kāzem). Note that *amal* (n) means “work” and Hāji Kāzem (n) is a name⁶¹.

5) Mollā Ali was a Qājār-period smith who signed his swords with the inscription *amal-e Mollā Ali* على ملا عمل (The work of Mollā Ali). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work” and Mollā Ali على ملا (n) is a name⁶².

5) A swordsmith from the late Qājār period signed his sword with the etched inscription *amal-e Mohammad Sāleh* صالح محمد عمل (The work of Mohammad Sāleh). Note that *amal* عمل (n) means “work” and Mohammad Sāleh (n) is a name⁶³.

The manuscript *Ahsā'iye-ye Arz-e Aqdas* [Statistics of the Holy Land] written by Zeynalābedin Ebn Marhum Šāhzādeh Hāji Mohammad Vali Mirzā in 1878–1879 C.E. by the order of Nāsserldin Šāh Qājār also report the names of some smiths from the Qājār period who were active in Tehrān as the following:

1) In the neighborhood Sarāb: Mohammad Ali Čāqusāz [note that مشهدی حسن سوهان ساز چاقوساز means “knifemaker”] and Mašhadi Hasan Sohānsāz

⁶⁰ For this maker’s mark on two swords attributed to Nassereldin Šāh Qājār see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:551–552, cat.170–171).

⁶¹ For this maker’s mark on a military sword from the Qājār period see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:560, cat.179).

⁶² For this maker’s mark on some Iranian military swords from the Qājār period see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006b:561, cat.180; 562, cat.181; 563, cat.182; 564, cat.183, cat.184).

⁶³ For more information see Moshtagh Khorasani (2006:553, cat.172).

[note that *sohānsāz* سوهان ساز means “filemaker” and *Mašhadi* مشهدی is a title given to a pilgrim who went to the Mausoleum of Emām Rezā in Mašhad on a pilgrimage].

2) In the neighborhood *Eidgāh*: عیدگاه Ali Čāqusāz, علی چاقوساز, Karbalā'i Hasan Šamširsāz [Note that *šamširsāz* شمشیرساز means “swordmaker” and Karbalā'i کربلائی is a title given to a pilgrim who went to the Mausoleum of Emām Hossein in Karbala on a pilgrimage], *Qolāmrezā Čāqusāz*, غلامرضا چاقوساز, and *Ostād Mohammad Šamširsāz* استاد محمد شمشیرساز [note that *ostād* استاد means “master” and given to smiths who have reached the mastery level].

3) In the neighborhood *Pā'in Xiyābān*: پایین خیابان *Abbās Čāqusāz*, عباس چاقوساز, Karbalā'i Ali Čāqusāz, علی چاقوساز, استاد رحمه الله شمشیرساز *Ostād Rahmatollāh Šamširsāz*, and *Allāh Qoli Šamširsāz* شمشیرساز الله قلی.

4) In the neighborhood *Nōgān*: نوقان Karbalā'i Hasan Šamširsāz and Hasan Čāqusāz چاقوساز حسن شمشیرساز.

It is noteworthy that two swordsmiths with the same name Karbalā'i Hasan Šamširsāz from different neighborhoods of *Eidgāh* and *Nōgān* worked in the same period.

Conclusion

Many quality Persian blades are signed with their maker's mark. The cartouches carrying the name of their makers are generally gold-inlaid on the blade. The most famous Persian swordsmith is *Assadollāh Esfahāni*. There are different cartouches with different handwritings, different types of applications of gold-inlay, and even dates that make it impossible that one sword could have made all these blades. The possibility of a

counterfeiter of quality blades can be ruled out in this case, as a counterfeiter would exactly copy the cartouche of the original maker and put the correct date and not a different one. Taking all these factors into consideration it seems more likely that *Assadollāh* was a title given to excellent swordsmiths. The same should be true with the name *Kalbeali* as many swords are signed with his name as well. More research in future will shed more light on these two names. Other swordmakers signed their swords with their own names as evidenced by the examples kept in the military museums of Iran.

Picture 1: Gold-inlaid inscriptions of a sword attributed to *Šāh Abbās* Safavid (1587–1629 C.E.) from the Military Museum of Tehrān (see Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006:434). The inscriptions read *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل and *Bande-ye šāh-e velāyat Abbās* عباس ولایت شاه بندہ.

Picture 2: Gold-inlaid inscriptions of another sword attributed to *Šāh Abbās* Safavid (1587–1629 C.E.) from the Military Museum of Tehrān (see Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006:432). The inscriptions also read *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل and *Bande-ye šāh-e velāyat Abbās* عباس ولایت شاه بندہ. There is also a gold-inlaid boddhu sign in letters. Note the huge difference between handwriting styles.

Picture 3: Gold-inlaid inscriptions of a sword attributed to *Šāh Soleymān* Safavid (1666–1694 C.E.) from the Military Museum of Tehrān (see Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006:448–449). The inscriptions read *Amal-e Assadollāh Esfahāni 1092* اصفهانی اسدالله عمل ۱۰۹۲ and *Innahu min sulayman wainnahu bismi Allāhi alrrahmani alrrahim*. الرحمن الرحيم الله بسم.

بسم الله و سليمان من الله (It is from Solomon, and (says): “In the name of Allah, Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim) (see al-Qur'an, 1993:323).

Picture 4: Gold-inlaid inscriptions of a sword attributed to Šāh Abbās Safavid (1587–1629 C.E.) from the Military Museum of Tehrān (see Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006:438).

The inscriptions read *Amal-e Kalbeali* کلبه‌ی عمل, *Bande-ye šāh-e velāyat Abbās* عباس (ذو الفقار الا سیف لا علی الا لاقت) (There is no young and courageous man but Ali, there is no sword but *zolfaqār*),, and *yā Ali madad* يا مدد علی (Oh Ali help).

Picture 5: Gold-inlaid inscriptions of a sword attributed to Šāh Safi (1629–1642 C.E.)

from the Military Museum of Tehrān (see Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006:444–445). The inscriptions read *Amal-e Mesri Mo'alam* معلم مصری عمل or *Amal-e Mo'alam Mesri* مصری معلم عمل and *Bande-ye šāh-e velāyat Safi* صفی ولایت شاه بندہ. There is also a gold-inlaid boddhu sign in letters.

Picture 6: Gold-inlaid inscriptions of a sword attributed to Šāh Soltān Hossein (1694–

1723 C.E.) from the Military Museum of Tehrān (see Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006:450).

The inscriptions read *Amal-e Mohammad Taqi Sakkāk* سکاک عمل محمد تقی and *Bande-ye šāh-e velāyat Soltān Hossein* سلطان حسین ولایت شاه بندہ.

Picture 7: Gold-inlaid inscriptions of a sword attributed to Karim Xān Zand (1750–1779 C.E.) from the Military Museum of Tehrān (see Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006:494). The inscriptions read

Amal-e Ali Asqar Esfahāni اصفهانی علی اصغر عمل and a Persian poem. The poem reads “This sword which [is meant] to hunt the celestial lion) is the sword of the Vakil, the king who conquers countries. He will always keep the key to victory in his hand and ([only if] one holds the handle of this sword in his hand.

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