

## INVESTIGATING THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF SPORTS DURING THE SAFAVID ERA BASED ON CHARDIN'S TRAVELOGUE (CASE STUDIES OF CHOGAN, JAVELIN THROWING, ARCHERY, AND HORSE RIDING)

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**Abstract.** During the Safavid period, sports, as an important cultural and social element, played a significant role in people's lives. Chardin's Travelogue, as a reliable historical source, examines the sports activities of that era. This research analyzes the functions of various sports such as Chogan, javelin throwing, archery, and horse riding in Safavid society. These sports not only helped to strengthen physical skills, but were also effective in strengthening national and social identity. According to Chardin's descriptions, this research seeks to explain the cultural and social effects of these sports on Safavid society and their place in people's daily lives. This research aims to examine the role and function of sports in the Safavid period with an analytical perspective based on Chardin's travelogue (a case study of Chogan, javelin throwing, archery, and horse riding). Therefore, it seeks to answer these questions: 1- How did different sports in the Safavid period affect the social and cultural identity of the society? 2- What were the differences in the way different sports were held and welcomed among different strata of Safavid society? The research findings indicate that the common sports in the Safavid period, especially Chogan and archery, as symbols of national and cultural identity, strengthened social and national cohesion among the people. Economic and social differences among different strata of Safavid society had a direct impact on the way sports were participated in and welcomed, so that the more affluent strata showed a greater tendency towards specific sports such as Chogan.

**Keywords:** Sports, Safavid, Chardin, Chogan, javelin throwing, archery, horse riding.

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ РОЛИ И ФУНКЦИИ СПОРТА В ЭПОХУ СЕФЕВИДОВ НА  
ОСНОВЕ ПУТЕВЫХ ЗАМЕТОК ШАРДЕНА (ПРИМЕРЫ ЧОГАНОВ, МЕТАНИЯ  
КОПЬЯ, СТРЕЛЬБЫ ИЗ ЛУКА И ВЕРХОВОЙ ЕЗДЫ)

***Аннотация.** В эпоху Сефевидов спорт как важный культурный и социальный элемент играл значительную роль в жизни людей. Путевые заметки Шардена, как надежный исторический источник, исследуют спортивные мероприятия той эпохи.*

*Это исследование анализирует функции различных видов спорта, таких как чоган, метание копья, стрельба из лука и верховая езда в обществе Сефевидов. Эти виды спорта не только помогали укреплять физические навыки, но и были эффективны в укреплении национальной и социальной идентичности. Согласно описаниям Шардена, это исследование стремится объяснить культурное и социальное влияние этих видов спорта на общество Сефевидов и их место в повседневной жизни людей. Это исследование направлено на изучение роли и функции спорта в эпоху Сефевидов с аналитической точки зрения, основанной на путевых заметках Шардена (примеры чоганов, метания копья, стрельбы из лука и верховой езды). Поэтому он пытается ответить на следующие вопросы: 1- Как различные виды спорта в период Сефевидов влияли на социальную и культурную идентичность общества? 2- Каковы были различия в том, как различные виды спорта проводились и приветствовались среди различных слоев общества Сефевидов? Результаты исследования показывают, что общие виды спорта в период Сефевидов, особенно чоган и стрельба из лука, как символы национальной и культурной идентичности, укрепляли социальную и национальную сплоченность среди людей. Экономические и социальные различия между различными слоями общества Сефевидов оказали прямое влияние на то, как участвовали в спорте и приветствовались, так что более обеспеченные слои показали большую склонность к определенным видам спорта, таким как чоган.*

***Ключевые слова:** Спорт, Сефевиды, Шарден, чоган, метание копья, стрельба из лука, верховая езда.*

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### **Introduction:**

The Safavid period is considered one of the most important and influential periods in Iranian history, in which culture and art flourished. Sports, as an inseparable part of the social and cultural life of the people during this period, played a significant role. The travelogue of Chardin, a French traveler who traveled to Iran in the 17th century, well illustrates sports activities and their effects on Safavid society. In his descriptions, he discussed sports such as **Chogan**, javelin throwing, archery and horse riding and pointed out the role of these sports in strengthening national and social identity. **Chogan**, as one of the most popular sports of the time, was known not only as a hobby but also as a symbol of strength and courage.

Javelin throwing and archery, as sports with military roots, were also indicative of combat abilities and individual skills. Horse riding, which is of particular importance in Iranian culture, was considered a symbol of courage and nobility. This research aims to examine the role and function of sports in the Safavid period based on Chardin's descriptions, analyzing the cultural, social, and economic impacts of these sports on the society of that time. Given the importance of this issue, it can be seen that various sports were not only recreational, but also played a key role in the formation of the social and cultural identity of the people.

### **Research Background**

Numerous studies have been published on sports and games of the Safavid period, but no independent and comprehensive analytical research has been conducted on the role and function of sports in the Safavid period based on Chardin's travelogue (a case study of Chogan, javelin throwing, archery, and horse riding). Javad Babaei (2015) stated in a study titled Chogan in the Safavid Era that Chogan had a high status among kings and military personnel, and even ordinary people in some periods throughout history, especially the Safavid period, so that Chogan was mentioned many times in the works left by domestic writers and travelogues of foreign ambassadors and merchants, and the profound influence of this sport on the composition of poems and literary works of this period, as well as the types of Chogan images in the form of various works of art. Yazdi, Hossein (2011) in a study titled "Futut, Courage, Heroism, Heroism and Sports in Iran during the Safavid Era" The purpose of this study is to provide a brief overview of the role and importance of chivalry, heroism and sports in Iran during the Safavid era. The researcher seeks to find the role of Fatis, Ayyar, Pahlavan, heroes and in other words athletes in the formation of the Safavid government, the consolidation and reaching the peak of glory and authority of Iran and the decline and extinction of that dynasty. And why whenever the Safavid government became stronger, the role of sports and athletes became much more prominent in it, and whenever the Safavids became weaker, the role of chivalry, heroism and sports became less prominent. Mahboobeh Jellodar Dezfuli and Mitra Sateri (2010) in a study titled "Investigating the Formal and Decorative Components of Safavid Period Bows Based on Contemporary Paintings and Drawings" stated that "bows and arrows" are among the weapons of the Safavid period, which had a special place in court ceremonies and hunting, in addition to battlefields.

Therefore, identifying bows from this period is of undeniable importance. The small number of remaining bows and the paucity of related sources have made their study difficult, but one can seek help in studying Safavid bows from one of the most important documents of this period, namely drawings, because Safavid period drawings were drawn in a very realistic manner in addition to their aesthetic values.



Sedighe Parvizinia (2015) in a study titled "The Position of the Horse in the Safavid Period (with Emphasis on the Perspectives of Travelogues)", this study seeks to examine the position of the horse in the Safavid period, using descriptive and analytical methods and based on library resources, with an emphasis on the perspectives of travelogues. In this regard, this study examines how to raise and maintain horses, horse riding and equestrian sports, the role of horses in military affairs, and horse grooming.

### **Chardin**

Jean Chardin, a French Protestant goldsmith, first arrived in Iran in 1665. Chardin spent ten years, mostly in Isfahan (until 1677), and collected valuable and extensive information about Iran, its cities, its people, and its way of life. His travelogue is a treasure trove of information about Iran in the late 17th century. Gibbon considers Chardin to be the leader of "all the travelers of that century" (Gibbon, 1968, vol. 6: 365), a tribute that is truly fitting. Chardin's account of Isfahan is notable for its unique features (Chardin, 1993, vol. 7: 273-492; Chardin, 1993, vol. 8: 1-143). He and his friend Herbert Dewigar of the East India Company would walk through the back streets of the city and note down whatever they found interesting. Dewigar also made separate notes, but his description of Isfahan cannot be compared with the current state of the city today, and only his report on Persepolis is comparable (in the book by F. Valentin, *Oude en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, Amsterdam, 1726 AD).

However, Isfahan has not changed much according to Chardin's travelogue, and it can still be considered a guidebook for most of its neighborhoods and parts. A few words should be said about Dewigar himself. He was a physician, studied medicine in the East Indies, and was then sent to Iran by the French East India Company. He was an outstanding linguist and was fluent in a number of oriental and other languages. Chardin describes him as follows (Chardin, 1372, Vol. 7:8-287). "I have formed a special bond of affection with Herbert Dewiager, a great scholar. It is enough to describe his merit that Gliwis, the eminent professor of Eastern Sunnism, had recognized him as the most worthy of succeeding him and occupying the university teaching chair among all his students. Our common love of Iranology and the preparation of an accurate, correct, and detailed report on Iran, which had not been prepared until then, united us with a bond of affection, and we decided together that the following year, at a common expense and by joint efforts, we would prepare a description and analysis of the Safavid capital in which no noteworthy point would be forgotten." (Ajnd, 1380:208).

### **Chogan**

Chogan was one of the most important and popular sports during the Safavid era, playing a significant role in the social, cultural, and political life of the time. This game was not only known as a recreational and entertaining activity, but also as a symbol of power and wealth in

the Safavid court. Chogan helped to strengthen physical skills, endurance, and a competitive spirit among the nobility and different classes of society. Chogan competitions were an opportunity to establish social connections and create stronger bonds between individuals, and helped to strengthen the national and social identity of the people. In addition, this sport also served as a means of demonstrating military power and defensive capabilities, as the skills required for horsemanship and accuracy in hitting the ball were also used on the battlefield.

Finally, **Chogan** was known as a key element in shaping the culture and identity of Iranians during the Safavid era, and had a profound impact on the social and cultural relations of the society. " Chogan is played in a large field with two poles, somewhat round and equal in size, placed at opposite ends, which act as gates. At the start of the game, the ball is thrown into the middle of the field, and the players, holding the Chogan in their hands, run in all directions to hit the ball; and since the Chogan stick is short, they must bend their bodies towards the ground so that they can make the ball rotate with the Chogan stick.

Among the rules of the game of Chogan is that the ball is hit with the Chogan stick while the horse is galloping, and the winner of the game is the team that has passed the ball through the opponent's goal the most times. This game is played with two teams, each consisting of fifteen to twenty people, and they compete with each other" (Chardin, 1372, Vol. 2:783). The opening ceremony for Chogan was accompanied by playing music. "After the ceremony of presenting gifts was completed in the king's sight, drums, trumpets, and some other musical instruments sounded; and this was the signal for the beginning of the games and battles. Soon after, wrestlers, fighters with wild animals, and swordsmen entered the field" (Chardin, 1372, vol. 2:641).

The game of Chogan has specific rules that the people who are in this game must observe. Chogan is played in a large field, at each end of which are two columns, some distance apart and equal in size, which serve as gates. At the beginning of the game, the ball is thrown in the middle of the field, and the players, holding the Chogan in their hands, run in all directions to hit the ball; and since the handle of the Chogan is short, they must bend their bodies towards the ground so that they can make the ball rotate by hitting the Chogan.

Among the rules of Chogan is that the ball is hit by the horse while galloping, and the winner of the game is the team that has passed the ball through the opponent's gate the most times. This game is played with two teams, each consisting of fifteen to twenty people, and they compete with each other" (Chardin, 1372, Vol. 2:783). In the game of Chogan, the players had specific tasks that they had to perform "These performances began with the artistic performance of three hundred riders who appeared from the four corners of the field.

These young riders, all children of courtiers, and all tall, fit, well-built and well-dressed, and each had several horses, played Chogan for an hour.

To play this game, they were divided into two equal teams. Several balls were thrown in the middle of the field and the players of each team tried to pass the ball through the bars that were installed at the end of both sides of the field. Of course, this was not easy because the opponents blocked the passage and penetration of the opposing team's balls with quick movements. If a player hit the ball with a club while his horse was standing or in any case deliberately hit the ball at the leg of the horse of one of the opposing team, he was ridiculed. The correct way to play was to hit the ball with a club while the horse was running, and a skilled and skilled player was one who, while driving his horse as fast as possible, returned the ball to the opponent's posts with a quick movement" (Chardin, 1372, vol. 2:642). This sport was actually a sign of courage, daring, and skill in military techniques. "Courage, daring, and skill in military techniques and the way of war, and knowing the firepower and heavy cavalry in times of hurry and delay, and multiplying the soldiers and providing delegations by adding slaves, lancers, gunners, riflemen, archers, axemen, spearmen, armor-bearers, and other necessary military trades, and providing an abundance of weapons and equipment for war and combat, and tools for castle-taking, conquest, and country-building, the symbol of which is the radial line on the golden plate of the shining sun, the symbol of his field, and the crescent moon from the full moon in this field, the shield of Minafam, the symbol of the bend of his lance. In agility, it is to the point where, while running, a galloping greyhound can snatch a ball from the ground with his hand, without the need for a pole, and, despite having a bow in his left hand, shoot an arrow at a target on the right side of the object" (Mousavi Fenderski, 2009:4). The playing field for Chogan had to be clean and free of stones because of the horse's movement and its special type. Hassan Rumlu has given the story of Qara Yusuf's escape from Egypt with his family and friends in more detail in Ahsan al-Tawarikh. He writes: "One day Sultan Faraj was playing Chogan in the field. Qara Yusuf also played Chogan with a group of his attendants, such as Pir Omar, Sultan Khajeh, Bayezid, Dalo Musa, and Weis Qorchi, while the other Turkmens watched from a distance. The Egyptian emirs were not pleased with their game and ordered the Turkmens to dismount and clean the stones of the field. It occurred to them that they were being summoned because of Qara Yusuf. The horseman went to the Sultan and said that we are strangers. Now, with the king's permission, we are going to our homeland.

As he was returning from the field to his house, he took his family and friends and raised the flag of departure for Diyarbakır. The Egyptian princes wanted to pursue him, but the Sultan prevented him... (Munshi Qazvini, 1378:247). One of the pastimes of the Iranian sultans in different historical periods was playing Chogan. "The other day, when a wonderful purple flower came from the Nilgun garden, the Sultan ordered the city to be built. When they reached the gate, the king dismounted and took the Sultan's cloak on his shoulders.



All the kings of Syria dismounted and rode to the square on the Sultan's horse. When the Sultan ordered the Chogan, every time the Chogan fell from the Sultan's hand, the king of Ashraf dismounted and covered the Chogan with dust around it. After kissing it, he kissed the Sultan's hand. Immediately, he saw the Sultan's side, the king of the earth, kissed him and rode away." (Mashkoo, 1350:167).

### **Javelin Throwing**

Javelin throwing was known as an important military sport and activity in ancient Iran, especially during the Achaemenid era. This sport not only helped to strengthen combat and horsemanship skills, but was also considered a symbol of courage and bravery. The javelin, which was a long and light spear, was used in battles and sports competitions. During the Achaemenid era, javelin throwing was popular as part of the military training of soldiers, as well as entertainment for the nobility and social elite. This activity could be held in public squares and in the presence of the crowd, and was considered a kind of demonstration of the strength and skill of the riders. In addition to its sporting aspects, javelin throwing helped to strengthen the national and cultural identity of the Iranians and played an important role in creating social bonds between different classes of society. In general, spear throwing during the Achaemenid era was not only a recreational activity, but also a means of enhancing military and social skills and demonstrating the rich culture of the Iranians. "Cyrus was known to be the simplest and most unassuming of his peers, and he obeyed his elders even more than his subordinates. Secondly, he was very fond of horses and was very skilled in riding. It is said that he was very eager to learn and teach, and he showed extraordinary alertness and agility in military exercises, and he was very skilled in spear throwing and archery" (Xenophon, 2005:76). Spear throwing during the Safavid era was one of the popular sports and hobbies that was especially popular among the nobility and upper social classes.

This sport was not only known as a recreational activity, but also helped to strengthen military and equestrian skills. Javelin throwing was usually held in large squares and in front of a crowd and was considered a demonstration of the strength and skill of the riders. This sport provided an opportunity for competition and demonstration of the physical and tactical abilities of the participants and was a symbol of courage and bravery among individuals. In addition to its sporting aspects, javelin throwing played an important role in strengthening national and cultural identity during the Safavid period and served as a means of creating social and cultural bonds between different members of society. This sport in a way reflected the epic spirit and nationalism of the Iranians at that time. Iranians were very skilled in javelin throwing. "The sport with the javelin is also called jeridah, which means date palm branch. Because it is made from dried branches of the date palm tree, and it is longer and heavier than double-headed spears.

Its throwing also requires strong arms, and greater talent and ability. In Iran, there are strong, skilled and skilled javelin throwers who can easily throw javelins six to seven hundred feet. I will explain more about this sport, which is one of the cavalry operations, in the coming chapters” (Chardin, 1372, Vol. 2:783). Javelin throwing had specific rules and conditions that had to be observed by the participants “After the polo game ended, the javelin throwing demonstration began and its procedure is as follows:

Twelve or fifteen horsemen separate from their group and, each holding a double-headed javelin in his hand, rush together at full speed to fight the opponent. Then another group of horsemen from the opposing group rises up in the same manner to confront them.

They also throw their javelin at the javelin throwers of the opposing group, and quickly return to the main body of their forces. Then other groups continue the show in the same way.

Among this group of nobles, there are fifteen young Ethiopians who are no more than eighteen to twenty years old. They are agile and very skilled in throwing the javelin.

They are so agile and agile that they make the entire field their playground, and they move their horses from one side to the other with the speed of the wind, and to collect the javelin they never stop their horse from its behavior, but when necessary they bend their bodies close to the ground to one side of the horse, and as the horse is galloping they pick up the javelin from the ground” (Chardin, 1372, Vol. 2:642). In general, javelin throwing during the Safavid period was not only a hobby but also a means of strengthening military and social skills, establishing social connections and demonstrating the rich culture of the Iranians.

### **Archery**

Archery was of particular importance in ancient Iran, playing a key role in military life, hunting, and even social culture. This art was considered one of the essential skills for Iranian horsemen and warriors, adding to their ability on the battlefield. Archery was considered a symbol of courage and skill not only in wars, but also in religious ceremonies and celebrations.

Learning archery as a martial art was taught to young people, and proficiency in this field was considered a sign of maturity and readiness to enter the larger society. Skilled archers were respected and praised for their abilities, and in many epic stories and ancient Iranian literature, there are heroes with outstanding archery skills. In addition to its military aspects, archery was also popular as a recreational and sporting activity. This activity strengthened collective morale and created social connections between people. Also, shooting in hunting helped to secure food and natural resources, doubling its economic importance. Finally, shooting was not only a practical skill but also part of the cultural and historical identity of ancient Iran, which had a profound impact on the social, military, and economic life of the people of that time. “After graduating from learning weapons, you must teach your child to swim and shoot, as I was a



Hajibi when I was ten years old, and you considered him a good warrior and a virile man. My father, may God have mercy on him, left me to Bouhi so that I could learn riding, shooting, shooting arrows, throwing spears, and slinging a sling, in other words, everything related to virile manhood and manliness” (Ansar al-Maali, 1285:115). Shooting during the Safavid period was of particular importance as a key skill in military service and daily life. This period, which was accompanied by considerable military power and influence, increased the need for shooting training for soldiers and young men. Shooting was not only used as a means of warfare to defend the land and confront enemies, but was also known as a symbol of courage and bravery in Iranian culture.

Learning to shoot was passed on to young people during this period as part of military education and social upbringing. Skill in shooting was considered a sign of maturity and readiness to enter society and guided adolescents towards social and military responsibilities.

Also, skilled shooters were respected and praised on the battlefields and in shooting competitions. In addition to its military aspects, shooting was also popular as a recreational and sporting activity among different classes of society. This activity not only helped to strengthen collective morale, but also provided an opportunity to strengthen social and cultural relations between individuals. In general, archery played a significant role in shaping the cultural and military identity of the Safavid period as an important art and skill. "In archery, the rider demonstrates his art by releasing an arrow backward, while rotating left and right, and aiming at a cup that is on a column one hundred and twenty feet high. To climb this column, they use curved wooden rods that are hammered into the column, which serve as stairs. The rider, holding a bow and arrow in his hand, rides toward the column on horseback, and as soon as he gets close to it, he turns his body backward to the right and left and shoots.

The condition for success in this sport is to have great skill and agility. This sport is common in all cities of Iran, and is also a favorite of kings. Shah Safi, the grandfather of the current king, loved this sport, and always hit the cup that was the target with the first or second arrow. His son Shah Abbas II was also very skilled in this sport, but his successor Shah Suleiman was less skilled than the other kings” (Chardin, 1372, Vol. 2:783). The bow was one of the preferred weapons of the ancient Iranians, which was common in Iran until the 19th century and was made with the utmost precision. Chardin describes the bows that were common in his era and says: “Iranian bows are made very beautifully and have a considerable value in all Eastern countries. Bows are made of wood and animal horns, that is, they are placed on top of each other and made strong with the feet of animals, and the surface is covered with smooth and slippery tree bark. This traveler should have said in his description of Iranian bows that these bows are often golden in color and are decorated with interesting designs, and craftsmen have depicted

hunting or fighting scenes of heroes on them with special skill. Chardin, describing archery, says: "In order to use the bow better, the Iranians place a ring on its string, and during practice, they put their thumb in it so that they can pull the string tightly. The material of this ring is also horn or ivory or jade. Jade is a type of marble that has a beautiful green color. Among European collections, bows have attachments that are made with care and in perfect elegance. The arrows of Iranian bows have a square tip and end in a straight handle. Some of these iron arrows are decorated with gold and their tips are polished and sharp (Alami, 1335:387).

### **Horseback Riding**

Horseback riding was an important and cultural activity in ancient Iran that had not only military aspects, but also social and recreational dimensions. Horseback riding was considered an essential skill for warriors and social elites and played a significant role in the military training of soldiers. During the Achaemenid era, horseback riding was considered a symbol of courage and valor, and horse riding competitions were held as public entertainment in city squares. This activity helped strengthen social bonds and create a national identity.

Also, horses had a special place in ancient Iranian culture and were considered a symbol of power and beauty in the literature and art of that time. Horseback riding in ancient Iran was not only a physical skill, but also a part of the cultural and social life of the people, which had a profound impact on the identity and history of this land. What words were used for these two classes of teachers in pre-Islamic Iran? However, we know that the teachers of horse riding, archery, and other arts that they taught to the nobles during the Sassanid period were translated in Arabic books as the word "mudab", meaning "teacher of manners."

According to Dinori, one of the reforms that Babak ibn Nahrawan, the secretary of the Divan of the Army, implemented during the reign of Anusharwan, was to regulate the work of the teachers so that they would not fail to pay what they charged the people for teaching horse riding and archery (Dinori, 2011:72). And Tabari mentioned a person named "Mahyai" or "Mahyar" among those who participated in the killing of Shahrbaraz and wrote his position as (Mu'dib al-Asawara) (Tabari, 1398:1063). The Asawara, which is the Arabic plural of Eswar or Savaar, were among the elite classes of Iranian society and were commanders of the Sassanid army, and it is clear from Tabari's writing that (Mu'dib al-Asawara) himself was considered one of the noble classes. Ferdowsi explained most of the cases that were translated "Mu'dib" in Arabic books with the word "Farhangi" and it is not known whether this word was used correctly instead of "Mu'dib" in the Sassanid era or not. (Mohammadi Malayeri, 1379, Vol. 4:270) Horse keeping and the job of a horseman were of particular importance during the Safavid era. Horses played a key role as a vital means in wars and battles. Safavid horsemen depended on the skill and strength of their horses, making proper care of them essential to maintaining military

readiness and combat capabilities. In addition to the military aspect, the breeding and care of horses was also important as a source of income and trade. Various breeds of horses, especially Turkmen and Arabian horses, were in demand in domestic and foreign markets. The grooms were responsible for providing food, health, and training for these horses. Horses were recognized in Iranian culture as symbols of beauty, strength, and courage. In literature, paintings, and miniatures, the role of horses and riders was prominent. The grooms helped preserve these cultural symbols with their expertise in caring for horses. The job of a groom was considered a prestigious profession in society and required sufficient knowledge about the nutrition, training, and behavior of horses. This job required specific skills that distinguished it from other jobs.

Horse riding was also popular as a recreational and sporting activity in the Safavid court. The grooms played an important role in preparing horses for equestrian competitions and public performances. In general, the care of horses and the job of the groom during the Safavid period had a profound impact on the daily lives of the people and the social structure of the time, not only from a military and economic perspective, but also from a cultural and social perspective. "The prestige and importance of the job of the groom depends on his financial rights and privileges. As far as I know, it exceeds fifty thousand ecus. The most certain of these incomes is the fee that he receives from the horses presented to the king. Also, those to whom the king gives horses must, according to custom, pay him a fee. The amount of these incomes varies in proportion to the value of the horses, and sometimes they give ten pistoles for each horse. On the other hand, when the king promotes his officials and officials on occasions, he does not hesitate to give them horses, and the Mir-Akhbar-Bashi takes advantage of the opportunity and receives gifts from those who have acquired horses. The Mir-Akhbar-Bashi has many servants and subordinates under his command to perform various services, including the Jolodard-Bashi; he is the chief of the horsemen and the first Mir-Akhbar. He is always on the king's horse and ready to serve him. Every day, from morning, he keeps five or six riding horses ready with saddles and complete equipment at the door of a special palace. Two of the horses are bridled and completely ready to ride at the door of the palace, and the other four are saddled and bridleless and tied to the horse. The Jolodard-Bashi is the head of the group of people who are responsible for keeping the horses' saddles and bridle neat and ready.

Ozeno Qorchibashi or the horseman is the deputy of Mir Akhtar and the first person to ride behind the king on horseback. He has ten men under his command, each receiving a salary of fifteen hundred éco. The cost of all food is also borne by the court. Mir Akhtarbash is the chief of the king's foot servants, who number more than thirty." (Chardin, 1372, vol. 3:1224).

The importance of horses in transporting people and goods is evident throughout history. "At eleven o'clock in the morning on the twenty-eighth, I left Tbilisi.



The Polish surgeon I mentioned earlier and several Georgians with whom I had a prior acquaintance accompanied me to a house. My guide went a distance ahead to warn the tax officials, who collected a fee when each pack horse left the city, from harassing and extorting money from my companions and cargo. Such guides are called "hosts" and are usually given the task of guarding foreign and domestic ambassadors and dignitaries during their travels, and preparing suitable housing, provisions, horses, or pack horses and carriages for them throughout the journey" (Chardin, 1993, vol. 1:386). Horse riding was recognized as an important art and skill in the social, military, and cultural life of Iranians during the Safavid period (1501-1736 AD). This period was the peak of the flourishing of arts and culture in Iran, and horse riding had a special place as a symbol of power and courage. During this period, horse riding was not only important as a military skill for warriors and soldiers, but also as a recreational and social activity. The Safavid kings, especially Shah Abbas I, were interested in horse riding, and horse riding competitions were common in the courts and cities. These competitions, as important social events, provided an opportunity to showcase the skills and abilities of riders. Also, horses were a symbol of wealth and power in Safavid culture, and the breeding of various horse breeds flourished during this period. The literature and art of the time were also influenced by horse riding, and images of horse riders can be seen in abundance in paintings and miniatures. "In Iran, there are skilled riders who stand calmly and firmly in the saddle, and ride their horses with a free spirit. When riding a horse, Iranian riders sit on the saddle slightly inclined to one side so that they can turn their bodies in any direction during easy riding exercises" (Chardin, 1993, Vol. 2:782). In general, riding during the Safavid period was not only a tool for war and defense, but also a part of the cultural and social identity of Iranians, which had a profound impact on art, literature, and the daily lives of the people.

### **Conclusion**

During the Safavid period, sports, especially polo, javelin throwing, archery and horse riding, played a significant role in the social and cultural life of the people. Chardin's travelogue, as a reliable source, clearly shows that these sports were not only recreational, but also served as tools to strengthen national and social identity. Polo, as a popular and respected sport in the Safavid court, was a symbol of power and wealth. This game not only strengthened physical skills and endurance, but also provided an opportunity to establish social connections and create healthy competitions between the nobility and different classes of society. Chardin, by describing polo ceremonies and competitions, well points out its effect on social cohesion and communication between individuals. Javelin throwing and archery were also of particular importance as military sports. These sports not only strengthened fighting skills, but also increased the people's warrior spirit and defensive readiness.

In fact, these activities were a symbol of the military power and defensive capabilities of the society, which were of great importance against external threats. Horse riding, as one of the important arts of the time, also represented courage and nobility. This skill was valuable not only on the battlefield but also in everyday life. By emphasizing the importance of horse riding, Chardin shows how this art was considered as part of the social identity of the Safavid people.

Finally, examining the role of sports in the Safavid period from Chardin's perspective shows that sports went beyond physical activities and acted as key elements in shaping the culture and identity of the Iranians. These activities strengthened social relations, promoted national spirit, and created a sense of solidarity among the people.

Therefore, sports during this period not only contributed to the physical health of individuals, but also served as a tool to strengthen the culture and national identity of the Iranians.

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