



‘ABBĀSĪ

‘**ABBĀSĪ**, a name first applied to the principal gold and silver coins issued by the Safavid king ‘Abbās I (1581-1629); it continued in use until the beginning of the 20th century.

The silver and gold coins of Safavid Persia bore no face values; they were very pure and passed by weight. The shahs did little to manage the currency, leaving to market forces the determination of the relationships between coins and the silver-gold ratio. In bookkeeping, names were given to certain weights of silver and of gold, but these unit names were applied to different weights in the central (or regal) accounting system and in the regional systems. These names were not stamped on the coins, but they sounded to foreign traders like indicators of face value. Before ‘Abbās I the chief unit of account, the *tūmān* (q.v.; regarded as equal to 10,000 dinars), was divided into 200 *šāhīs*. The largest silver coin with wide circulation was usually called a *šāhī* (with a value of fifty dinars). Under Moḥammad Ḳodābanda (1577-81) a two-*šāhī* (or 100-dinar) silver coin also came into use and was called a *moḥammadī*.

‘Abbās I made many monetary innovations between 1615 and 1620. He revised the accounting system, attempting to make it uniform throughout the country, and he raised the weights of the coins in general circulation, although a single weight standard was not established. The name ‘*abbāsī*’ was applied to two silver and two gold coins, which had weights of 144 and 120 troy grains. Both silver ‘*abbāsīs*’ were assigned the value of 200 dinars (thus 50 ‘*abbāsī*’ = 1 *tūmān*); the two gold coins were valued at 2,000 dinars.



For the rest of the Safavid period, the coins which were assigned these revised account values were called ‘*abbāsīs*. From 1629 to 1642 all ‘*abbāsīs* weighed 120 grains; from then until 1666 silver ‘*abbāsīs* were struck at 144 and 120 grains, gold ones only at 120 grains. Thereafter, few gold coins were struck, apart from some weighing 54 grains—the standard of the caliphal dinars and Venetian ducats. These seem not to have been called ‘*abbāsī*; they were probably identified with the traditional *ašrafī* (originally a Mamluk gold coin which had circulated widely in the Middle East from the 15th century). Also after 1666, the 144-grain silver ‘*abbāsī* was discontinued. Under Solaymān (1666-94), two types of ‘*abbāsī* persisted, one valued still at 200 dinars, the other (called “big ‘*abbāsī*” or, more correctly, *panj-šāhī*) at 250 dinars. After a monetary crisis in 1687-88, silver and gold ‘*abbāsīs* alike were struck at 114 grains. After devaluation to 84 grains in 1717 and to 54 grains in 1721, in order to finance the Afghan war, the original Safavid coin type came to an end. Old ‘*abbāsīs*, however, continued to circulate; and the term ‘*abbāsī* was perpetuated as a popular name for the amount of 200 dinars.

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