



The Effect of the Principle of Aiding and Abetting Sin on Decentralized Cryptocurrencies from the Perspective of Imami Jurisprudence

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Abstract

The emergence of decentralized cryptocurrencies has introduced significant legal and jurisprudential challenges regarding their nature, ownership, and transactions. A key issue is their potential conflict with the Islamic principle of "T'annah Bar Ithm" (aiding in sin), which prohibits facilitating sinful acts. Cryptocurrencies, operating outside government oversight, can enable crimes like money laundering and terrorist financing, potentially qualifying as aiding in sin. This necessitates an examination of whether this principle applies to decentralized cryptocurrencies from the perspective of Imami jurisprudence. This research aims to explore the impact of the "T'annah Bar Ithm" principle on decentralized cryptocurrencies within Imami jurisprudence. Given the novelty of cryptocurrencies and the absence of comprehensive legal frameworks, understanding the relevant Islamic legal rulings is crucial. Such analysis can aid in creating a robust legislative and judicial framework for regulating this domain. Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach, the study examines the nature of decentralized cryptocurrencies, the concept of "T'annah Bar Ithm" in Imami jurisprudence, and the interplay between these two. Findings reveal that decentralized cryptocurrencies, by bypassing governmental control and facilitating criminal activities, fall under the prohibitions outlined in the "T'annah Bar Ithm" principle. This underscores the need for legal and regulatory mechanisms to manage and monitor these technologies effectively, ensuring their benefits are harnessed while preventing misuse.

Keywords: Decentralized Cryptocurrencies; Principle of aiding and abetting sin; Jurisprudential Law; Aiding in crime; Jurisprudential Rules.

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1. Introduction

Cryptocurrencies represent a new class of exchange instruments that leverage advanced cryptographic techniques to secure transactions and generate new units. Unlike conventional fiat currencies, cryptocurrencies exhibit distinct characteristics—foremost among them being decentralization. In contrast to traditional financial systems dependent on intermediaries such as banks, cryptocurrency transactions occur on a peer-to-peer basis. Transaction validation and user authentication are conducted without any intermediary institution. Combined with rapid transaction speed, low fees, and immunity from banking or fiscal oversight, this decentralized framework facilitates increased activity by non-state actors and, to some degree, promotes independence from the international financial order at both national and transnational levels. States' responses to cryptocurrencies have varied widely—ranging from outright bans to conditional allowances or even supportive regulatory frameworks. This spectrum of responses reflects profound divergences among policymakers and theorists regarding the risks and benefits posed by these digital assets. While the proliferation of cryptocurrencies introduces numerous opportunities, it also raises significant challenges. A principal concern is their facilitation of illicit activities. The inherently decentralized nature of these currencies and the lack of sufficient governmental oversight over related transactions create fertile ground for criminal misuse—enabling offenders to obscure their identities, transfer illicit funds, and finance unlawful operations. Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate whether the Islamic legal principle of *'awn 'alā al-ithm* (aiding wrongdoing) applies to decentralized cryptocurrencies within the legal frameworks of Iran and Twelver Shi'ī jurisprudence. Specifically, given the decentralized nature of cryptocurrencies and their potential for misuse in criminal activities, does this juridical principle extend to developers of such currencies? Can it serve as a basis for imposing legal prohibitions, restrictions, or criminal liability on them as accomplices? In recent years, extensive technical scholarship has covered the cryptographic foundations, protocol mechanisms, and security-related challenges of cryptocurrencies. In contrast, legal and criminal law research remains in its infancy. Noteworthy contributions include Hesam Khazaei's study *"Modern Money Laundering and Digital Currency Punishments under Iranian Criminal Law"* (2022), Mojtaba Farahmand and Mohsen Jalili Pirani's *"Digital Currencies and Future Financial Crimes"* (2022), and Azam Zare's *"Legal Regime of Digital Currencies in the Context of Iranian Law"* (2022). Nevertheless, ambiguities persist—especially concerning the legal and criminal treatment of decentralized cryptocurrencies. One unresolved issue is the applicability of *'awn 'alā al-ithm* to these technologies. The working hypothesis of this study holds that, based on the

nature and conditions governing *‘awn ‘alā al-ithm* and considering the role decentralized cryptocurrencies play in facilitating crime, this principle indeed applies to such currencies. Consequently, developers may bear criminal responsibility as accessories. To test this hypothesis, the research first examines the concept of decentralized cryptocurrencies, then defines the principle of *‘awn ‘alā al-ithm*. It proceeds by delineating the scope of application for this principle, and finally assesses its relevance to decentralized cryptocurrency ecosystems. By clarifying how *‘awn ‘alā al-ithm* can underpin developer liability, this research aims to inform more effective legal and regulatory frameworks in the domain.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2-1. The Jurisprudential Concept of *‘awn ‘alā al-ithm*

In Arabic, the root *‘ā-w-n* signifies “help” or “assistance,” and the Qur’ān urges believers to aid one another in righteousness and piety (*taqwā*) (Ṭarīḥī, n.d., vol. 6, p. 285). This lexical field includes *‘awn*, *ta‘āwun* (“cooperation”), and *isti‘ānah* (“seeking aid”) (Mustafawī, 2016, vol. 8, p. 268). Dictionaries define these terms variously: *‘awn* as “assistant,” *ta‘āwun* as “collaboration,” and *isti‘ānah* as “asking for help” (‘Amīd, 2002, vol. 2, p. 1272). Scholars such as Bajnurdī and Fāzil Lankrānī define *‘ānāh* as support or assistance across contexts (Bajnurdī, n.d., vol. 1, p. 365). In this study, *‘awn* and *ta‘āwun* refer broadly to cooperation or support in an act—legal or illegal. The term *ithm* is defined in multiple lexicons as sin or wrongdoing (Farāhīdī, 1989, vol. 8, p. 250; Ṣāḥib ibn ‘Abbād, 1994, vol. 10, p. 195), and associated with sin or objectionable deeds (Ibn Manzūr, n.d., vol. 12, p. 6; Jawharī, n.d., vol. 5, p. 1857). Rāghib of Isfahan describes *ithm* as conduct that distances one from moral good (Rāghib, n.d., p. 63). Ṭarīḥī defines it as an actionable sin (Ṭarīḥī, n.d., vol. 6, p. 5–6), while in *al-Taḥqīq* it is set against *birr* (“righteousness”), connoting delay or weakness in doing good (Mustafawī, 2016, vol. 1, p. 43). Concisely, *ithm* refers to any act that hinders reward attainment, implies fault, and includes harm (Qurashī, 1998, vol. 1, p. 24; Rāmpurī, n.d., p. 202). Defined jurisprudentially, *‘awn ‘alā al-ithm* refers to assisting another in committing a sin or transgression. The accomplice does not directly execute the illicit act but plays a subsidiary role—by preparing the means, encouraging the principal, or providing guidance.

2-2. Evidential Basis of the *‘Awānah ‘alā al-Ithm* Principle

The principle of *‘awānah ‘alā al-ithm* (“assisting in wrongdoing”) is a well-established rule in Shi‘ī jurisprudence that prohibits aiding others in committing sins or transgressions. Its application spans multiple legal

domains—including contracts (*mu'āmalāt*), offer and acceptance (*ijāb wa qābul*), and obligations (*ḍamān*). The justification for this principle is derived from the four primary sources of Shi'ī legal rulings:

1) Qur'ānic Evidence: The verse “...*And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...*” (Q. 5:2) explicitly commands believers to refrain from aiding in sin or transgression (Faḥr al-Lankarānī, 2004: 443).

2) Prophetic and Imāmī Traditions (Aḥādīth): Numerous narrations from the Imāms (‘a) prohibit assistance in wrongful deeds (Ibn Bābawayh, 2003: 276; Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1995/2016: 377).

3) Rational Evidence (‘aql): Prominent Shi'ī jurists, including Bajnurdī, Ṣayfī, and Faḥr al-Lankarānī, argue that ‘aql deems it unjust and immoral to assist another in wrongdoing (Bajnurdī, 1998: 364; Ṣayfī, 2004/2005: 127; Faḥr al-Lankarānī, 2004: 450).

4) Scholarly Consensus (Ijmā’): Many jurists, such as Marākīm Shirāzī, al-Ḥusaynī al-Marāghī, and al-Nirāqī, affirm that consensus among Shi'ī scholars on the prohibition of assistance in sinful acts substantiates the rule’s validity (Marākīm Shirāzī, 2005: 401; al-Ḥusaynī al-Marāghī, 1997/1998: 565; al-Nirāqī, 1997: 75).

In sum, *‘awānah ‘alā al-ithm* stands as a fundamental jurisprudential doctrine, operative across multiple chapters of Shi'ī fiqh, and underpins a range of legal judgments concerning wrongful facilitation—including in contract law, agency, and liability.

2-3. Decentralized Cryptocurrencies

Decentralized cryptocurrencies constitute a novel form of digital currency that operates without any central authority—such as a government, central bank, or intermediary entity. Leveraging blockchain technology, they enable secure, transparent, intermediary-free transactions, and offer the following key advantages:

1) Financial sovereignty: Users maintain complete control over their assets without intermediaries.

2) Security: Transactions are secured via cryptographic protocols and blockchain, making tampering or fraud practically impossible.

3) Transparency: All transactions are permanently recorded on a public ledger and are publicly accessible.

4) Peer-to-peer operation: Transactions occur directly between users, eliminating the need for banks or other facilitators.

5) Global reach: These currencies can be transferred across borders without geographic constraints (Nakamoto, 2008: 1–2).

Blockchain—the foundational technology behind decentralized cryptocurrencies—was introduced alongside Bitcoin in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Bitcoin’s success is largely attributable to the trust and security inherent in blockchain architecture. Technically, a blockchain is a decentralized, peer-to-peer distributed ledger that integrates cryptography, consensus protocols, and encryption to ensure data cannot be altered, censored, or compromised, despite its public accessibility. The emergence of decentralized cryptocurrencies represents a paradigm shift in money management and usage—empowering users with financial autonomy and enabling borderless digital transactions. In this study, the analysis focuses primarily on Bitcoin, the first, most valuable, and most widely recognized cryptocurrency. Crucially, Bitcoin’s architecture is truly decentralized—lacking a founder or central issuing authority—unlike many other cryptocurrencies. Therefore, it serves as the focal point for this investigation.

2-4. Key Characteristics of Decentralized Cryptocurrencies

Decentralized cryptocurrencies possess a range of unique features that distinguish them from traditional financial systems. One of the foremost attributes is **ease of access**: unlike conventional financial systems that require complex registration procedures and account openings, the use of cryptocurrencies merely necessitates the creation of a digital wallet. Another defining characteristic is **user anonymity and data privacy**; cryptocurrency transactions do not require disclosure of personally identifiable information such as names, email addresses, or physical addresses—thereby significantly enhancing users’ privacy. **High flexibility** is another advantage of decentralized cryptocurrencies, allowing for fast and seamless transfers at any time and to any location, without the need for authorization, long delays, or exorbitant fees. **Speed and high efficiency** further characterize this digital asset class; the interest rates and rewards associated with cryptocurrencies are often updated in real time (in some cases, every 15 seconds), and these rates may substantially exceed those found in conventional financial markets such as Wall Street. **Transaction transparency** is yet another salient feature; unlike most private corporations that rarely offer high levels of disclosure, all transactions on blockchain networks are publicly visible (Sharma, 2024). Nonetheless, the emergence of cryptocurrencies has introduced **new security threats** to individuals, society, and nation-states. Two of the most commonly exploited tools in criminal contexts are the **Dark Web** and **mixers**. The Dark Web constitutes a hidden layer of the internet that enables access to data not indexed by standard search engines. This includes sensitive governmental, corporate, and financial data, as well as information related to illicit transactions involving

narcotics, weapons, human trafficking, and other criminal enterprises—all of which may be facilitated through cryptocurrency payments. The protection of sensitive digital information is a pressing global concern directly linked to national security and the safeguarding of fundamental human rights. **Mixers**, also known as tumblers, are online platforms that aid in the **money laundering** of illicitly obtained cryptocurrencies. In this process, cryptocurrencies from various users are pooled together and redistributed anonymously, making it extremely difficult to trace the origin or rightful owner of these funds. Additionally, numerous online platforms allow the purchase of illegal goods and services—including drugs, firearms, child pornography, and other contraband—primarily through cryptocurrency (Cherniavskiy et al., 2021: 311). Such activities are considered **criminal offenses** under the penal laws of most jurisdictions. In response to concerns regarding the misuse of cryptocurrencies by traffickers, embezzlers, and cybercriminals, some scholars argue that **any tool or system is susceptible to abuse**, including cash, precious metals, and even traditional banking infrastructures. For instance, while the invention of paper currency solved the logistical challenge of transporting large volumes of gold and silver, it also paved the way for counterfeit money and other financial crimes. Accordingly, **prohibiting a technology due to its potential for misuse is not a rational solution**; rather, the more effective approach lies in formulating comprehensive regulatory frameworks and strengthening security mechanisms to minimize abuse (Modarresi Yazdi & Ahmadi, 2021: 196). Given these complexities, it becomes necessary to **investigate the applicability of the Islamic legal principle of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* (assistance in sin)** to decentralized cryptocurrencies. To determine whether this principle can be extended to such a contemporary technological phenomenon, several critical legal questions must be addressed:

1) Does the application of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* require **intentionality** (*qaṣd*) on the part of the assisted party (i.e., must they be sentient or merely an instrument)?

2) Is a **shared intent** (*ittihād al-niyya*) between the assistant (*mu'īn*) and the principal offender (*fā'il*) a necessary condition for legal liability?

3) Must the **unlawful act be materially realized** (*wuqū' fī al-khārij*) for the rule to be invoked?

4) Most importantly, to what extent does the rule entail **obligatory** (**taklīfī**) versus **consequential** (**waḍ'ī**) legal effects?

3. The Scope of the Principle of Cooperation in Sin (*Ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm*) and Decentralized Cryptocurrencies

The applicability of the Islamic legal principle of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm*

(cooperation in sin) to specific phenomena such as decentralized cryptocurrencies can be analyzed through four main criteria:

3-1. First and Second Conditions: Intention and Knowledge of the Supporting Agent

The notion of *intent* (*niyya*) encompasses two distinct meanings. The first is *general intent*—a volitional act accompanied by awareness (*sū' al-niyya al-`āmm*). This type of intent is unanimously deemed necessary for criminal liability in assistance (*i`āna*), as an agent unaware of their act or of the principal's criminal intent cannot be held accountable. The second is *specific intent*—the deliberate aim to facilitate the commission of a sinful act (*sū' al-niyya al-khāṣṣ*). While all jurists acknowledge the necessity of general intent, there is disagreement regarding the requirement of specific intent. In the context of decentralized cryptocurrencies, growing concerns have emerged regarding their potential use for illegal activities such as tax evasion and criminal facilitation. Evidence suggests that the developers of cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin were aware of such potential. In his seminal white paper, Satoshi Nakamoto introduced Bitcoin as a *peer-to-peer electronic cash system*, emphasizing the elimination of trusted intermediaries like banks. This decentralized structure potentially enables users to conduct transactions without governmental oversight (Nakamoto (a), 2008). Nakamoto's subsequent statements further underscore this libertarian vision, framing Bitcoin as a vehicle to reclaim a vast realm of individual freedom. He argued that while governments had succeeded in controlling centralized networks like Napster, they would struggle to regulate peer-to-peer networks such as Gnutella or Tor (Nakamoto (b), 2008). From this perspective, the invention of blockchain and distributed ledgers was not merely a technical innovation but a political and philosophical stance aligned with libertarian and anarchist ideologies (Kharif, 2014). Governmental reports also highlight the increasing misuse of cryptocurrencies. The UK's National Crime Agency (NCA, 2018: 40) has expressed concern over the rising use of cryptocurrencies for money laundering, despite cash remaining the most widely used medium. Empirical studies confirm that decentralized cryptocurrencies significantly enhance criminal operations such as money laundering, terrorism financing, fraud, and cybercrime. Features such as ease of access, borderless transactions, anonymity, and darknet compatibility facilitate such activities. Although decentralized cryptocurrencies may not yet dominate criminal finance, early trends indicate a growing preference for their use among illicit actors. International institutions, including the Financial Action Task Force (FATF, 2015: 32–33) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2015), have issued explicit warnings and

advocated for robust, risk-based regulatory frameworks.

3-2. Third Condition: Specific Intent of the Supporting Agent

Regarding whether *specific intent* is necessary for an act to constitute *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm*, three major juristic views emerge:

1) The First View holds that mere awareness of the principal's sinful intent suffices. It is not necessary for the assisting party to intend the sin themselves. Prominent scholars supporting this view include Imām Khomeinī (2005, Vol. 1: 143), Muḥaqqiq Dāmād (2018, Vol. 4: 185), Sayyid al-Khū'ī, and Shaykh al-Anṣārī. The latter references classical jurists like Shaykh al-Ṭūsī and 'Allāma al-Hillī, emphasizing that *intent* is not required for *i'āna* (Anṣārī, 2019, Vol. 1: 133). Their rationale is grounded in the generality of the Qur'anic verse: “*Do not cooperate in sin and transgression*” (Q 5:2), along with ḥadīths prohibiting the sale of tools of sin without mentioning the seller's intent.

2) The Second View, upheld by jurists like al-Shahīd al-Awwal (1414, Vol. 2: 392), Fāḍil Narāqī (1417: 78), and Muḥaqqiq al-Thānī, argues that both awareness of the principal's sin and the assistant's intent to contribute to the sin are necessary. They emphasize the customary understanding (*'urf*) of the concept of assistance, citing ḥadīths such as that of 'Umar ibn Udhayna regarding the sale of dates to wine producers (Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, 1412, Vol. 12: 169).

3) The Third View considers customary usage (*'urf*) as the decisive criterion. An act qualifies as *i'āna* if it is either carried out with intent or is customarily understood as assistance. Scholars such as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ardabīlī and Ṣāhib al-'Anāwīn argue that for assistance to be legally recognized, the act must either be intentionally supportive or be considered as such by societal norms (al-Marāghī, 1417, Vol. 1: 566).

Based on these discussions, the third view appears most compelling. It maintains that specific intent is not a prerequisite; rather, it is sufficient for *'urf* to recognize the act as contributory to a sinful outcome. Accordingly, if knowledge exists that decentralized cryptocurrencies are being used for criminal activities, then—even absent direct intent—customary judgment would affirm *i'āna*. Moreover, establishing criminal complicity requires a demonstrable, direct link between the facilitator's act (e.g., cryptocurrency deployment) and the principal act (e.g., criminal transaction). This link must be integral and not seen as an isolated or unrelated act.

3-3. Fourth Condition: Materialization of the Sinful Act

Some jurists argue that for *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* to be realized, the sinful act must occur in reality. Shaykh al-Anṣārī attributes this view to several contemporaneous scholars but personally rejects it. He argues that selling grapes to a known wine-maker constitutes assistance in sin, regardless of whether the

grapes are ultimately fermented into wine (Anṣārī, 2019, Vol. 1: 136). Sayyid al-Khū'ī (1418, Vol. 35: 276–277) and Imām Khomeinī (2005, Vol. 1: 194–213) share this view. Khomeinī asserts that, based on rational principles, any act that facilitates sin is inherently reprehensible, irrespective of the outcome. Customary understanding also supports this approach. For instance, a person who provides burglary tools to a thief is considered to have aided the crime—even if the theft is never committed. Thus, whether or not the sin materializes, the provision of essential tools with knowledge of intent is sufficient for *i'āna*. This reasoning extends to developers of cryptocurrencies. If they knowingly create platforms that are highly likely to be used for criminal purposes, they may be considered legally complicit, regardless of whether specific crimes occur. Criminal actors utilize decentralized cryptocurrencies to obscure the sources of illicit funds from drug trafficking, human trafficking, and cybercrime. The pseudonymous nature of such transactions makes tracing and asset recovery exceedingly difficult. For example, in 2021, the hacker group REvil conducted a ransomware attack on a major U.S. firm, extorting \$42 million in Bitcoin—funds that proved difficult to trace due to Bitcoin's decentralized structure (Shamsian, 2024). Moreover, terrorist groups exploit cryptocurrencies to raise and transfer funds covertly. In 2017, the Islamic State (ISIS) employed Bitcoin to collect millions of dollars through donations, online commerce, and extortion. Cryptocurrencies offer distinct advantages for such operations:

1) **Anonymity** makes it difficult to trace funds to specific individuals or organizations.

2) **Borderless transferability** enables rapid global fund movement.

3) **Regulatory loopholes**, especially in the early years, allowed unrestricted access to crypto platforms.

Similarly, cryptocurrencies facilitate **narcotics trafficking**. Online drug markets increasingly use cryptocurrencies to circumvent traditional banking systems. While the closure of Silk Road in 2013 by U.S. authorities marked a significant achievement, it did not end darknet drug commerce (Pagliery, 2013). On the contrary, newer markets have emerged, exploiting cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Monero (The Monero Project, n.d.), and Zcash (Z.Cash, n.d.) to enable untraceable transactions. The decentralized and anonymous nature of these platforms presents persistent challenges for law enforcement.

4. Legal and Jurisprudential Implications of the Principle of *Ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* (Cooperation in Sin) for Decentralized Cryptocurrencies

4-1. Normative (Taklīfī) Ruling

According to the predominant view among Shī'ī jurists, the normative (*taklīfī*) ruling derived from the principle of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* in relation to

decentralized cryptocurrencies is prohibition (*ḥurmah*). Assisting others in committing sin and disobedience is legally and morally impermissible under Islamic law (‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, 1413/5: 22; al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, 1408/2: 3; al-Anṣārī, 1398/1: 8). While there may be no explicit penal statute from the Sharī‘ah prescribing a specific punishment for such assistance, the *ḥākim al-shar‘* (Islamic legal authority) is authorized to impose *ta‘zīr* (discretionary punishment), since the act constitutes a sinful offense. The justification for *ta‘zīr* is rooted in general principles such as the injunctions against evil (*nahy ‘an al-munkar*), the command to promote virtue (*amr bi al-ma‘rūf*), and the broader injunctions to cooperate in righteousness and piety, including the punishment of sinners. Thus, the silence of the Sharī‘ah on certain offenses does not entail impunity or lack of accountability (al-Ḥusaynī al-Marāghī, 1417/2: 627).

4-2. Declarative (Wad‘ī) Ruling

Jurists are divided regarding the *wad‘ī* (declarative or status-based) ruling of *ta‘āwun ‘alā al-ithm*. Some hold that while transactions involving facilitation of sin are morally impermissible, their legal validity (*ṣiḥḥah*) is preserved (al-Ardabīlī, 1403/10: 56). Others consider transactions carried out with the intention of facilitating sin to be void (*bāṭil*) (‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, 1413/5: 22). This principle has been applied across various chapters of Islamic jurisprudence. Classical examples include:

- ✦ The prohibition of selling weapons to the enemies of Muslims (Imām Khomeinī, 2005/1: 203),
- ✦ Selling tools for constructing crosses or idols (al-Ardabīlī, 1403/10: 55),
- ✦ Selling grapes with the intention of producing alcoholic beverages (‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, 1411: 93; al-Anṣārī, 1398/1: 129),
- ✦ Renting out vehicles or shops for transporting or selling alcohol (al-Ardabīlī, 1403/10: 55).

Al-Shahīd al-Thānī differentiates between essential industries that serve public welfare—which are permissible to teach and practice—and those utilized for impermissible purposes, such as supporting oppressors, which are categorically forbidden (al-Shahīd al-Thānī, 1410/1: 263). Imām Khomeinī extended the application of this principle beyond the conventional juridical context. Throughout his life and political leadership, he viewed silence in the face of oppression as tantamount to endorsing the oppressor, constituting a form of *ta‘āwun ‘alā al-ithm* (Imām Khomeinī, 1389/1: 230). On this basis, he issued *fatwas* forbidding membership in the *Rastākhīz* Party and passive compliance with the Pahlavi regime, deeming them contributory to the downfall of Islam (Imām Khomeinī, 1389/3: 76). This jurisprudential principle became a pivotal ideological and legal foundation for his opposition to the regime, and through

his guidance, public awareness grew that passive complicity with tyranny was a form of sinful cooperation. Thus, one of the most significant socio-political consequences of this principle was the formation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. After the revolution, *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* remained a cornerstone in the Islamic Republic's foreign policy doctrine—leading to the rejection of submission to oppression, the refusal of hegemonic dominance, and the political isolation of certain oppressive states (Imām Khomeinī, 1389/2: 139; 5:148, 539; 15:163).

4-3. Application to Decentralized Cryptocurrencies

Given the decentralized nature and partial opacity of blockchain-based assets, the use of such cryptocurrencies in unlawful activities—including money laundering, narcotics trafficking, terrorism financing, and cybercrime—can fall within the scope of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm*. These uses constitute forms of material facilitation of sin. Therefore, due to the serious implications and potential harms arising from the misuse of decentralized cryptocurrencies, state intervention through prohibition, regulation, or risk-based control becomes imperative. Regulatory engagement in this domain serves multiple legitimate objectives:

1) Crime Prevention: deterring the use of digital currencies in criminal networks,

2) Consumer Protection: safeguarding users from financial exploitation and fraud,

3) Financial Stability: integrating cryptocurrencies within the legitimate economic system,

4) Secure Innovation: ensuring the safe and ethical deployment of emerging financial technologies.

Conclusion

Due to their anonymous and untraceable nature, decentralized cryptocurrencies have created a conducive environment for criminal activities such as money laundering, trafficking, and terrorism financing. Developers of these cryptocurrencies, being aware of such potential misuse, effectively provide tools that facilitate criminal conduct. Their failure to implement preventive measures to deter such abuse further substantiates this facilitation. In some cases, these developers also benefit financially from criminal transactions enabled by their platforms, thereby reinforcing their motivation to develop and promote these technologies. Accordingly, the facilitation of decentralized cryptocurrencies—when accompanied by knowledge of their potential use in criminal acts—constitutes a clear instance of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* (cooperation

in sin). Even in the absence of a direct intention to aid in committing crime, knowledge of such misuse and the existence of a proximate causal relationship between the enabler's action (e.g., development or distribution) and the criminal act suffice, from the standpoint of customary perception (*'urf*), to categorize the facilitator as an accomplice. To confront these challenges, it is imperative to adopt appropriate strategies for monitoring and controlling the criminal use of cryptocurrencies. This requires enhanced oversight of developers and users, inter-agency coordination among governmental, military, intelligence, and judicial institutions, and strengthened international collaboration through specialized global regulatory bodies. In addition to enforcement and monitoring, governments and international organizations must design and implement comprehensive, coordinated policies for prevention and control. Given the growing exploitation of cryptocurrencies in criminal contexts, relevant legal frameworks must be updated. Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives addressing the risks of misuse are also essential components of a holistic policy response. From a jurisprudential standpoint, the application of the principle of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* to decentralized cryptocurrencies can be analyzed under three primary scenarios:

1. Conditional Criminal Intent

In the first scenario, the development or trading of a cryptocurrency is *explicitly* conditioned upon its use in criminal activity. In such cases, the act clearly falls within the scope of the prohibition under the principle of *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm*, without ambiguity. If a developer or trader stipulates that the recipient use the cryptocurrency for unlawful purposes, their conduct unambiguously constitutes cooperation in sin.

2. Development or Trade with Criminal Purpose

In the second scenario, the developer or trader engages in development or trade with the *intention* that the cryptocurrency will be used for criminal purposes. This, too, unequivocally constitutes assistance in sin, as the actor's intent is aligned with enabling prohibited conduct. The intention (*qaṣd*) to facilitate sin is itself sufficient to establish culpability under this principle.

3. Absence of Explicit Intent

The third scenario involves the development, sale, or use of cryptocurrencies *without* a demonstrable criminal intent or when intent is uncertain or indeterminate. In this situation, jurists have expressed divergent views:

✦ Some scholars—such as Shaykh al-Anṣārī and Sayyid al-Khū'ī—hold that *ta'āwun 'alā al-ithm* is only realized when the facilitator has specific knowledge and intent regarding the commission of a crime by the recipient. Merely knowing that the cryptocurrency *could* be used in criminal activity is insufficient without the explicit intention to support the crime (al-Anṣārī, 1398/1: 132–133;

al-Khū'ī, 1418/35: 276–277).

✦ In contrast, scholars like Imām Khomeinī and the author of *ʿUrwat al-Wuthqā* maintain that *actual intent* is not necessary, provided there is knowledge of the likely criminal use. What matters is the *customary judgment* (*tahqīq ʿurfī*); that is, if society deems the developer or trader to be assisting in a crime due to their knowledge of potential misuse, then the principle of *taʿāwun ʿalā al-ithm* applies—even absent explicit criminal intent (Imām Khomeinī, 1385/1: 194–213).

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