Published: March 3, 2021
Last Updated: May 21, 2021

ṢAFI I, SHAH

SHAH ṢAFI I, sixth Safavid ruler (r. 1038-52/1629-42; b. in 1020/1611; d. Monday, 12 Ṣafar 1052/12 May 1642).

Background and succession. Shah Ṣafi I, whose original name was Abu'l-Naṣr Sām Mirzā, was the son of Moḥammad-Bāqer Mirzā (also known as Ṣafi Mirza), Shah ʿAbbās I's eldest son, and Moḥammad-Bāqer Mirzā's Georgian wife, Delāram Ḵānom. After his father was killed at the orders of Shah ʿAbbās (q.v.) in 1024/1615 (Eskandar Beg, pp. 883-84, tr. pp. 1098-99; Falsafi, II, pp. 175-80), Sām Mirzā grew up in the secluded environment of the royal harem, where he was plied with drugs, ostensibly at the orders of Shah ʿAbbās, to keep him passive and subdued and unable to pose a challenge to the shah. He was the first Safavid ruler to be thus cloistered from the world before coming to power. He learned to read and write and also practiced shooting and riding "upon an ass in the gardens," as Krusinski (I, p. 44) put it. He does not seem to have been a quick study, though, showing little interest in learning (Chick, pp. 307-8; Olearius, p. 341; Tavernier, I, p. 570; Babayan, pp. 373-74).

Shah ʿAbbās fell ill in the summer of 1037/1628 while in Qazvin, and in the next few weeks reportedly pondered the question of his succession in discussions with the main court astrologers, Moḥammad-Šafiʿ and Moḥammad-Taqi, as well as with Morād Māzandarāni, a respected regional cleric. His choice fell on Sām Mirzā (Eskandar Beg, p. 1075, tr., pp. 1300-1301; Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 30-31). Adam Olearius (q.v.; pp. 652-53), who visited Iran seven years after the events and who relied on eyewitness, reports

that Shah ʿAbbās also conferred with top officials ʿIsā Khan, Zaynal Khan, Yusof Aqā, and Abu'l-Qāsem Teymur Beg Ev-oḡli (see EV-OĞLI FAMILY), after which it was confirmed that he had indeed selected Sām Mirzā, to be renamed Ṣafi after the father. In the late fall of that same year, the shah moved to his winter residence in Mazandaran and decided to summon Sām Mirzā to Ašraf (see BEHŠAHR) in order to groom him for the succession. Yet this plan was cut short by the shah's death on 24 Jomādā I 1038/19 January 1629 (Eskandar Beg, p. 1075, tr., p. 1300).

Enthronement. Since it proved impossible to keep Shah ʿAbbās's death a secret for long, the grand vizier, Ḵalifa Solṭān (q.v.), and the *qorčib ā ši* ʿIsā Khan Šayḵāvand, who were both residing in Ašraf, decided on quick action to forestall the claims of rival pretenders and out of fear that various factions in the capital might take advantage of the power vacuum created by the death of Shah ʿAbbās. A (mostly female) palace faction seems to have favored Emāmqoli Khan, the son whom Shah ʿAbbās I had deprived of eyesight, as the next shah, with the argument that he was not fully blind, or even the latter's son, Najafqoli Khan, a five-year-old child. There were also those who spoke for the right of rule of Moḥammad Khan Šayḵāvand, the seventeen-year-old son of the *qorčibāši*, on account of his Safavid parentage (Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, p. 87). The grandees thus made up a document bearing Shah ʿAbbās's seal and declaring Ṣafi the legitimate successor and sent it to Isfahan. The enthronement took place on 4 Jomādā II 1038/29 January 1629, more than two weeks before the top courtiers, the *ark ā n-e dawlat*, returned from Māzandarān to Isfahan (Chick, pp. 307-8; Gorgijanidze, p. 84; Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 7, 9; Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 33-37). To disassociate the new monarch from the Sufi past of the dynasty, a throne may have been employed as a substitute for the prayer mat that had previously been used. Ṣafi's accession was also the first in which the high clergy participated, with the famous Mir Dāmād (Sayyed Moḥammad-Bāqer b. Mir Šams-al-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥosayni Astarābādi, q.v.) officiating (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 37-39; Ṣefatgol, p. 226; Quinn, pp. 324-25). One chronicler claims that, after crowning him, the cleric offered to give the new monarch a foot kiss (*p ā -b ū s*), but that Ṣafi stood up and embraced him, raising him above everyone else (Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, p. 219). Three days of festivities on the illuminated royal square followed the enthronement (Chick, p. 307).

Presumably to enhance the new ruler's religious legitimacy, Shah Ṣafi's accession was accompanied by a ban on the

consumption of wine and the closing of taverns (Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 22-23). On the other hand, the ban on the use of tobacco that Shah ʿAbbas I had issued was repealed. (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, p. 39). In keeping with tradition, existing offices and privileges were confirmed; large sums of money, amounting to a surely exaggerated sum of 500,000 tumans, were distributed to various individuals and causes, and lavish presents were granted to grandees, reportedly amounting to 8,000 robes of honor (*ḵelʿat*; q.v.). The silk export monopoly that Shah ʿAbbās I had instituted in 1028/1619 was also abolished, allowing anyone to export silk now (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 39, 41, 47).

Acquisition of power. It took Shah Ṣafi five years to establish full control over his court and country. The grandees of the realm, long held back in their ambitions by Shah ʿAbbās, took advantage of the accession of a young inexperienced ruler to assert themselves. The most important of these were ʿIsā Khan, Ḵalifa Solṭān, Zaynal Khan, Rostom Khan, and Abu'l-Qāsem Beg (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 40-41). The Dutch reported how officials openly brawled in front of the shah over the question of whether or not to move against the Ottomans (Dunlop, pp. 747-49). In the first two years of Shah Ṣafi's reign, rebellions erupted throughout the land. Some of these had a messianic character; most appear to have been motivated by attempts to retrieve customary rights on the part of Qezelbash forces resentful of the loss of privileges they had suffered, or regional notables keen to have taxes imposed by Shah ʿAbbās reduced (Babayan, 1994; Qiriqlu, p. 113; Pavlova). The uprising of the messianic Darviš Reżā (q.v.) in Qazvin sputtered once the dervish and his men died under siege (Waḥid Qazvini, pp. 237-38; Rota, pp. 127-28, 368; Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 117-21). A more serious, similarly millenarian revolt erupted in Gilān. It was led by Sayyed Moḥammad, also known as Ḡarib-šāh, who claimed the Safavid throne, and ended with his capture and execution under torture, with 2,000 of his followers, in the summer of 1629 (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, p. 49-54; Fumani, pp. 278-82; Chick, p. 307; Dunlop, p. 742; Olearius, pp. 546-47). In the first two years of Shah Ṣafi's reign, there were revolts in Kurdistan, Astarābād, and Qandahar (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfāhani, pp. 75; Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 26-31; Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 40-41; Dunlop, pp. 742, 750). Bedouin raids in Ḵuzestān and Uzbeg incursions in 1632 elicited an armed response a year later, as did the loss of Ardalān, whose ruler, Khan Ahmad Khan, sided with the Ottomans after Ṣafi had his son Sorkhāb Beg blinded (Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 37-38; Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 53-54; Marduḵ, II, pp. 105-7; Ardalan, p. 39). Cossacks raided the Caspian

littoral (Wāleh Eṣfahāni, p. 114). In Georgia unrest broke out after King Teimuraz (Ṭahmuraṯ) returned and incited revolt among his countrymen following the death of Shah ʿAbbās I (see GEORGIA ii). In response, an army led by Rostom Khan, the new sepahsālār, moved to Georgia in 1631. Safavid reprisals included the sacking of Ganja (q.v.) in the fall of 1632 (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 127, 129, 135; Gorgijanidze, pp. 85-86; Alonso, 1978, p. 109; Chardin, II, pp. 63-64).

The Ottomans, too, took advantage of the power vacuum and marched toward Mesopotamia. They laid siege to Baghdad, but were repulsed, suffering a huge loss of life (Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 53-55; IOR, E/3/12/1300, 20 October 1630, fol. 160; Foster 1630-33, p. 141). They also penetrated Persia proper and came as far as Hamadan, which they sacked, but they were defeated at the Battle of Māhidašt in the spring of 1630 (Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 71 ff.; Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 38-43; Rota, pp. 83-84; Küpeli, pp. 174-83). Shah Ṣafi himself took part in the counter campaign designed to retake Ardalān and relieve Baghdad. After capturing Ḥella, he performed a pilgrimage to Najaf and Karbala, accompanied by Mir Dāmād. He also had infrastructural improvements undertaken in Iraq and ordered Mirzā Taqi Khan to undertake the restoration of the Shiʿi shrines with money generated by *ḵāṣṣa* (q.v.) property (Waḥid Qazvini, p. 242; Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 112-14, 148, 158; Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, p. 105; Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 60 ff., 80-81, 94-95; Wāleh Esfahāni, pp. 112-13; Floor, 1997, p. 246; Babaie et al., pp. 101-2).

The expedition into Iraq was followed by a massive purge in Isfahan culminating in a bloody massacre in early 1632 (Babayan, pp. 367-69), which left all of the shah's real and potential rivals incapacitated, dead, blind, or imprisoned. The first casualty was the military commander (*sepahs ālār*), Zaynal Khan, ostensibly for acting impetuously and causing the death of many Safavid soldiers in the confrontation with the Ottomans (Ḵᵛājagi, pp. 92-94; Rota, pp. 92-93, 355). At Ṣafi's orders, the three sons of the *qorčib ā ši*, ʿIsa Khan Šayḵāvand, and Zobayda Begom, one of Shah ʿAbbās's daughters, were decapitated. In early 1632, four sons each of Ḵalifa Solṭān and of the *ṣadr*, Mirzā Moḥammad-Maʿṣum, were killed, while two sons of Mirzā Moḥsen, the superintendent (*motawalli*) of Mashhad, were blinded (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 124-25; Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 43-44). Ḵalifa Solṭān himself lost his position as grand vizier, to be replaced by Mirzā Abu Tāleb Beg Ordubādi. Between August 1632 and May 1633 (Moḥarram-Šawwāl 1042), ʿIsā Khan Šayḵāvand

himself was killed. The same fate befell Yusof Aqā, the head of the royal harem; Mohammad Khan, the governor of Khorasan; and ʿAssāb Khan of Baghdad with his three children, while the children of the governor of Ganja were castrated (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, p. 140; Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 62-63; Rota, pp. 128-29, 368-69; Dunlop, pp. 422-33). On the actual night of the massacre, 29 Rajab 1041/20 February 1632, reportedly forty female harem members were killed and Zaynab Begom (q.v.) was removed from the palace (NA, VOC 1106, 8 May 1633; Babayan, pp. 367-69). Dāwud Khan, the governor (*wāli*) of Georgia, had to flee to Ottoman territory to escape death (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 126-27; Alonso, 1978, pp. 105-6).

The final act in this drama was the breaking up of the power of Emāmqoli Khan (q.v.), who, having inherited the governorship of Fārs from his strong father, Allāhverdi Khan (q.v.), had carved out a fief that encompassed most of southern Iran, and that rivalled the shah's own realm in size and wealth. Following Emāmqoli Khan's demise, the south was subdivided into various new regions, such as Kuhgiluya, Dawraq (q.v.), and Bahrain, that were parceled out to different rulers (Braun, p. 19; Röhrborn, pp. 10-11).

The Persian-language sources present this carnage as necessary for the restoration of stability and seek to mitigate the cruelty by emphasizing the shah's concern for the security and wellbeing of the country and its people (Ḵᵛājag**i** Eṣfahāni, p. 140; Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 63, 95). It has also been interpreted as an important moment in the demise of the Qezelbāš and the point at which the inner harem took over, acknowledging Shah Esmāʿil's male descendants as the sole claimants to the Safavid throne (Babayan, pp. 366-87). As many *ḡolām*s as representatives of the Qezelbāš perished, though, and the events were perhaps just the concerted effort a new, young, and insecure ruler following in the footsteps of a legend had to make to establish his own power base.

By early 1633 the country was said to be at peace and the shah, now "feared and revered as a god by all his subjects," seemed ready to take control of the affairs of state (NA, VOC 1106, 8 May 1633, unfol.). Yet the bloodshed did not end. In the summer of 1634, the shah had his grand vizier (*eʿtemād-al-dawla*), Mirza Ṭāleb, killed, as well as one of his astrologers (*monajjem-b ā ši*); Oḡorlu Khan, the *i šik ā q ā si-b ā ši* (chief usher); and Ḥasan Beg, a *yas ā vol-e ṣoḥbat*, and two wives (Ḵᵛājag**i** Eṣfahāni, p. 188; Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 103-4; Dunlop, p. 525).

Character traits and reputation. Opinions vary about Shah Ṣafi's formal education following his accession. One chronicler explicitly states that the new shah was quite ignorant of the world and the state of the country. Shah Ṣafi consequently received further instruction from officials such as ʿIsā Khan, Ḵalifa Solṭān, Zaynal Khan, Rostom Khan, and Abu'l-Qāsem Beg (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 40-41). Other chroniclers flatteringly insist that he was eager to learn (Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 94-95; Šāmlu, I, p. 208). An Armenian source calls the shah "accomplished in learning and well spoken" (Zakʿaria of Kʿanakʿeṛ, p. 57). Yet Safi never seems to have gone much beyond a rudimentary formal education, and all indications are that he showed little interest in culture or religion.

We have few eyewitness descriptions of Shah Ṣafi. This is due in part to his lack of interest in philosophy and the metaphysical sciences and the resulting absence of lively gatherings that his grandfather had often organized and to which foreigners were occasionally invited to discuss issues of intellectual interest. The Carmelites (q.v.) describe a 19-year-old newly acceded ruler as being of "fair height," and having a long face somewhat pitted with smallpox, large eyes, and rather white in complexion (Chick, p. 308). Adam Olearius, one of few Westerners who were received in audience by Shah Ṣafi in 1636, describes him as a 27-year-old, well-built man, of middling height, white and fresh of face, with a hawk-like nose and a small black goatee, which did not droop as was the Persian custom (Olearius, pp. 509, 664). He was given to drinking, having switched to alcohol shortly after coming to power at the advice of his physicians, who thought wine an antidote to *maʿjun*, the opium-based drug with which he had been plied in the harem (Chick, p. 350; Tehrāni, p. 93). He suffered from poor health, reportedly coming down with brief bouts of illness at least five times between 1630 and 1639 (Braun, p. 117). Olearius (p. 663) claims that he had three wives and that his harem housed some 300 concubines, but otherwise the lack of personal information on the shah extends to his family circumstances.

Whereas the chronicles written in the orbit of the court naturally are positive or muted in their assessment of Shah Ṣafi's personality, foreign visitors are explicit in their descriptions of his cruelty. Olearius (p. 654) claims that, according to legend, Ṣafi had come into the world with two bloody hands and that Shah ʿAbbās, notified of this, had predicted that his reign would be violent. Later commentators, beginning with Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (q.v.), having read Olearius, echoed this verdict, calling his reign unprecedentedly

sanguinary and contrasting him unfavorably to his grandfather (Tavernier, I, pp. 475-76; Bembo, p. 218; Krusinski, II, pp. 44-46; Malcolm, I, p. 575).

Yet this negative reporting was offset by a more positive verdict among foreign observers. Olearius (pp. 529-30, 663) called Shah Ṣafi generous, especially when he was drunk, and hailed his decision to allow 7,000 deportees from the Caucasus to return home. Resident Christians and those visiting Persia at the time echoed this praise on account of the shah's tolerant attitude, which they favorably compared to his grandfather's "enslavement of the Armenians" (Chick, pp. 314-15, 350-51). In 1633, he forbade all state officials to oppress Armenian merchants, admonishing them not to obstruct their movements in the country and to lend them assistance without unduly taxing them (Baiburt'ian, p. 64). The rulers of Christian Europe also continued to harbor hopes for the eventual conversion of Persia's ruler and his court, with the argument that Shah Ṣafi's forefathers had been Christians, that he wished to marry the daughter of the king of Georgia, and that most of his soldiers were Georgians and thus inclined to the Christian faith (Taddeo di S. Elisio, fol. 297). Shah Ṣafi's interest in Christianity is documented. He had an Iranian convert to Christianity named Moḥammad Paolo Zamān Farangi Khan placed in a monastery to learn Italian, a task that the convert performed so well that he could read Christian texts to the shah. There was, in this context, also the rumor that the shah had not been circumcised and that as an adult he considered himself to be too old to be (Chick, p. 308; Richard). Iranian clerics suspected him of having Sunni leanings and resented his lack of consultation (Jaʿfariān, pp. 1165-90).

Other events and developments. In the view of the Dutch, Shah Ṣafi only started to care for state affairs in 1635 (Dunlop, p. 591). He was ably assisted in this by his grand vizier, Mirzā Taqi Khan, who was appointed in this function in 1043/1633. Yet, even after coming to real power, Shah Ṣafi did not project the forceful and inspiring attitude of his illustrious grandfather. Other than the initial march into Mesopotamia, he personally only led one military expedition, the campaign to oust the Ottomans from Yerevan, undertaken in 1635 (Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 99-101; Astarābādi, pp. 251-53; Rota, pp. 194-206; Dunlop, pp. 583, 616). When the shah regained Yerevan in 1636, he had its fortress, *qalʿa*, destroyed and its Sunni mosques leveled (Abu'l-Mafāḵer Tafreši, pp. 121 ff.; Schillinger, p. 115). The Ottomans, having taken Yerevan, had moved to Tabriz in 1045/1635, took the city, and plundered and destroyed it (Küpeli, pp. 218 ff.).

Shah Ṣafi similarly was less expansive in his outlook than his predecessor, and diplomatic relations with the outside world diminished in frequency and intensity during his reign. In 1629, he sent letters announcing his accession and requesting continued good relations to various European rulers, including Pope Urban VIII, the Habsburg emperor, and the Polish King Sigismund III (Fekete, 1936, pp. 269-74; Chick, pp. 309-10; Piemontese, p. 451; Matthee, 2017; Jaśkowski et al., pp. 171-80). Given the military interaction, various missions naturally were exchanged with the Ottomans (Navāʾi, pp. 24-42, 45-48). There was also diplomatic traffic with the Mughal state, beginning with the mission of Ṣafdar Khan in 1046/1636, which mostly involved the recovery of Qandahar (Rota, pp. 217-18, 406-7; Riazul Islam, pp. 100-102). Relations with the East India companies continued, but these were mostly managed by grand vizier Mirzā Taqi Khan rather than by the ruler himself (Fekete, 1977, pp. 493-97). In later years, there seems to have been little diplomatic traffic and correspondence coming out of Persia. Pope Urban VIII sent three letters to the shah between 1633 and 1637, but no response has been recorded (Piemontese, pp. 453-54). Following the recovery of Yerevan, the shah asked Giovanni da Lucca, O. P., to be his envoy to the king of Poland (Eszer, pp. 420-21). In 1045/1636, Shah Ṣafi sent a letter to the doge of Venice concerning silk (Fekete, 1977, pp. 499-503). Several Russian missions visited Persia during Shah Ṣafi's reign, but little information about their aims and mandates has been preserved (Matthee, 2013, pp. 339-40). In 1636-37, Russian and Mughal missions were present in Isfahan. The best-known Western mission visiting Persia in this period is that of Otto Brüggeman, a merchant from Hamburg who, in 1635, was sent to Persia representing Frederick III, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, and whose journey was recorded by its secretary, Adam Olearius. Shah Ṣafi sent a well-wishing envoy, Išik-āqāsi Emāmqoli Beg Qājār, back with the Danish delegation (Vahman, p. 178), but nothing ever came of this communication.

Many parts of Iran, especially the western borderlands, remained restive even after the shah had established control. The Ottomans attacked Ḥella, and Ḵuzestān remained unruly. In Kurdistan, a rebellion led by Khan Aḥmad Khan continued to flare up. The Uzbeks, meanwhile, raided Khorasan throughout the 1630s (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, pp. 138, 162-63, 175, 181, 220 ff.; Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, p. 70).

In 1638, Qandahar, betrayed to the Mughals by its governor, ʿAli Mardān Khan (q.v.), was lost to the Safavids. Yet, instead of mounting an expedition to

regain the city, Shah Ṣafi decided to march toward Mesopotamia to protect Baghdad against the Ottomans. He failed, though, and on 25 Shaʿbān 1047/12 January 1638 Baghdad definitively fell to the Ottomans (Ḵᵛājagi Eṣfahāni, p. 262; Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, p. 215; Küpeli, pp. 242 ff.).

The loss of Mesopotamia marked a definitive change in Iranian foreign policy and, in the long term, in the country's domestic conditions. A year later, the Safavids concluded the so-called Peace of Zohāb (or Qaṣr-e Širin) with the Ottomans, ending almost a century and a half of intermittent warfare with their archenemies. The Zohāb peace agreement lessened the urgency for the Persians of finding allies against the Turks and thus reduced the importance of maintaining diplomatic relations with Christian powers and, with that, the role of European diplomats including missionaries in Persia (Matthee, 2012, pp. 118-21; Ṣāleḥi, pp. 237-47).

The Peace of Zohāb concluded, all indications are that Shah Ṣafi paid less and less attention to the affairs of state to become engaged in pleasurable activities. We have reports of foreign envoys arriving in Isfahan in the last years of his reign, among them an Ottoman envoy, a papal envoy, an emissary from the Deccan, and envoys from Urganj in 1050-51/1641, but it is not clear if any counter mission went out (Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 244-45, 247, 249, 250).

Shah Ṣafi died on Monday, 12 Safar 1052/12 May 1642, in Qazvin, on his way to recapture Qandahar, exhausted from drinking, although Olearius claimed that he was poisoned (Olearius, p. 664; NA Coll. Gel. 166, 23 May 1642, unfol.; NA VOC 1141, 20 Oct. 1642, fol. 535, which give 11 May; Eskandar Beg and Wāleh Eṣfahāni, p. 256; Chick, p. 350). He was buried in Qom. His son and successor, Shah ʿAbbās II (q.v.), was enthroned four days later.

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