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ʿABBĀS II

ʿABBĀS II, Shah, seventh Safavid king, son of Shah Ṣafi I (r. 15 Ṣafar 1052-25 Rabiʿ I 1077/15 May 1642-25 September 1666). Shah ʿAbbās II, known as Solṭān-Moḥammad Mirzā prior to his enthronement, was born in Qazvin, most likely, as the Dutch report, on Monday 14 Ṣafar 1042/30 August 1632, as the first of Shah Ṣafi's five sons (NA, VOC 1106, 8 May 1633, unfol.). Alternative dates are given as Friday 18 Jomādā II 1043/December 1632 and Monday 4 Rajab 1042/15 January 1633 (Malcolm, I, p. 577, referring to the *Zobdat al-tawārik̲*; Luft, p. 153; Wāleh Eṣfahāni, p. 153). Little more is known about his youth than that he grew up in the royal harem surrounded by women and eunuchs, and that his tutor was Rajab-ʿAli Tabrizi (d. 1080/1670), a man of letters whom Raphaël du Mans called remarkable for his love of science and his virtue, and who remained the shah's confidant throughout his reign (Richard, ed., I, p. 67; Naṣrābādi, I, p. 223). Dutch sources tell us that as of 1040/1639, three years before acceding to the throne, ʿAbbās was supervised and trained by Moḥammad-ʿAli Beg, the steward (*nāẓer*) of the royal household, and Jāni Khan Šāmlu (q.v.), the head of the praetorian guard (*qurči-bāši*; NA, Coll. Gel. de Jongh 166, 23 May 1642).

ʿAbbās II, aged nine-and-a-half, was enthroned in Kashan on Thursday 15 Ṣafar 1052/May 15, 1642, four days after the death of his father, Shah Ṣafi I (r. 1038-52/1629-42) and following a meeting of the state council presided over by grand vizier Mirzā Moḥammad Sāru Taqi. Sayyeds and ulama prominently participated in his accession ceremony, and the event was accompanied by a tax remission valued at 500,000 (no doubt an exaggerated sum) tumans as well

as a ban on the consumption of alcoholic drinks (Waḥid Qazvini, pp. 340-41; Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 368-71; Tavernier, I, pp. 576-77; Fasāʾi, I, p. 477; Matthee, 2005, p. 54). From Kashan the new shah moved to the cooler environs of Qazvin, where he spent the remainder of the year, including the following winter, engaged in educational training, games, and sports, only to return to Isfahan in the early spring of 1053/1643 (Waḥid Qazvini, pp. 348-52; Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 376-9; Tavernier, I, pp. 576-79, provides an eyewitness account of the shah's festive entry into Isfahan). The transition was peaceful, and the newly crowned ruler, apparently desirous to maintain the prevailing stability, confirmed all existing appointments upon his accession and handed out robes of honor (*ḵalʿat*) to all incumbent officeholders (NA, Coll. Gel. De Jongh, 15 July 1642).

In the first years of the shah's reign the court was effectively ruled by a cabal consisting of Shah Ṣafi's mother, Anna Ḵanom, grand vizier Mirzā Moḥammad "Sāru" (blond) Taqi, and the *qurči-bāši*, Jāni Khan (NA, VOC 1141, 20 August 1642, fol. 547; NA, Coll. Gel. de Jongh 298, 1 November 1642). While the young shah enjoyed himself riding horses and hunting with falcons and leopards, these retained a tight grip on power, making sure to rid themselves of any competitors, including the powerful Rostam Khan, the military commander (*sepah-sālār*) and governor of Azarbaijan, who was killed at their instigation (NA, Coll. Gel. De Jongh 171a, 14 October 1642; VOC 1144, 14 May 1643; Floor, 1997, p. 255).

Shah ʿAbbās took effective power in 1055/late 1645 by ridding himself of Mirzā "Sāru" Taqi and Jāni Khan, using Jāni Khan to remove his octogenarian, exceedingly powerful grand vizier, and then turning on Jāni Khan (Floor, 1997, pp. 258 ff.; Matthee 2012, pp. 43-44). Soṭān-al-ʿOlamāʾ Ḵalifa Solṭān (q.v.) became his next grand vizier, the first cleric to serve as grand vizier (*eʿtemād al-dawla*, q.v.). He remained in office until his death in 1064/1654.

Western travelers and residents, seduced by the warm welcome they received at the court and the business opportunities it offered, tended to portray ʿAbbās's personality and character in favorable terms. Joan Cuneaus, the VOC envoy who in March 1652 met with the shah during an audience where the ruler allowed his guests to drink from his own wine cup, described him as being of medium height, rather skinny, loose-limbed, and beardless (Speelman, pp. 148-49). Some faulted him for acts of cruelty, but most compared his character favorably to that of his father, emphasizing his energy, his high-mindedness, and his sense of justice, which reminded them of

his great-grandfather, Shah ʿAbbās I (Daulier Deslandes, p. 17; Tavernier, I, pp. 580-81, 616; Manucci, I, p. 40; Valentijn, bk 5, p. 301). Contemporary Christian sources stress his friendly attitude toward his Christian subjects (Arakel, p. 534; Brosset, II, p. 80; Chardin, IX, pp. 398-99). In Jean Chardin's words, the shah considered himself put on the throne by God to rule as a king responsible for the welfare of all his subjects, not as a tyrant bent on the curtailment of freedom, including the freedom of conscience. Iranians, according to the same observer, appreciated his sense of justice, his magnanimity, and the courage and good conduct that had, in their eyes, contributed mightily to the rehabilitation of the country (Chardin, IX, pp. 397-98, 512-14). Subsequent commentators and historians have echoed this verdict (Picault, IX, p. 72; Malcolm, I, pp. 578-79; Lockhart, p. 29).

A measure of justice and stability indeed marked the reign of Shah ʿAbbās II. In 1065/1655 the shah instituted a semi-weekly session (*majles*) for the purpose of rendering public justice; and during his reign it was still possible for commoners to grab the reins of his horse and hand him petitions (NA, VOC 1208, 12 April 1655, fol. 512; Waḥid Qazvini, p. 556). The mid-17th century in general was a period of relative tranquility and economic prosperity for Iran, to the point where ʿAbbās II's reign saw few momentous events in the form of rebellions and wars. The Persian chronicles indeed describe several years of his reign, such as 1060 and 1069, as "peaceful" and "uneventful" (Waliqoli Šāmlu, fols. 91, 141). The most noteworthy domestic event of his reign is a rebellion among the Baḵtiāri (q.v.) tribe in 1054/1644, which was put down, after which the region was turned into crown land (*ḵāṣṣa*) at the behest of "Sāru" Taqi (Luft, pp. 108-10). The sources also mention an uprising among Isfahan's population against the city's Georgian city prefect (*dārugā*), Parsadan Gorgijanidze (Waliqoli Šāmlu, fols. 130-33v; Gorgijanidze, pp. 12-13; Keyvani, pp. 156-57).

ʿAbbās II's reign further saw fierce religious controversy. The shah's well known fondness for Sufism and Sufis, whom he patronized to the point of becoming known as the "dervish-loving monarch," is likely to have contributed to the outburst of anti-populist and anti-Sufi writing by religious scholars, which targeted non-Shiʿite Muslims as well as Sufis of the Qalandari, antinomian variant (Babayan, pp. 410-11; Abisaab, pp. 89-120). At various times between 1055/1645 and 1064/1654, the Safavid authorities also forbade Christians from selling alcohol to Muslims, and took other measures targeting non-Shiʿites. In 1067/1657 the Armenians were forced to leave Isfahan proper

and to decamp to New Julfa (see JULFA), across the Zāyandarud. The same period also saw increased pressure on Jews and Christians to adopt Islam, leading to mass conversion among these groups (Matthee, 2012, pp. 173-91). In most cases it is clear that, rather than the shah himself, clerical pressure, the zeal of high officials seeking to establish their religious credentials, and a growing need for revenue were responsible for these measures. Faced with pressure from different sides, Shah ʿAbbās II may well have chosen to give in to hard-line arguments and requests for reasons of expediency, more particularly to appease his clerics, some of whom engaged in criticism of the shah's own unholy life style.

Shah ʿAbbās II's foreign policy was marked by caution and calculation. During his reign, the Safavid court maintained regular diplomatic contacts with nations and companies ranging from the Ottomans, the Mughals of India, Russia, Ethiopia, and the European maritime companies, the VOC (Verenigde Oostindische Compagne) and the English East India Company. Following the Peace Treaty of Zohāb of 1049/1639 with the Ottoman empire, the western borderlands were generally quiet. The only incident with the Ottomans involved troubles in Basra. Allegedly instigated by the Iranians, tensions were defused when an ambassador was sent to Istanbul (Floor, 2006, p. 561; Matthee, 2006, p. 67). More turbulent were conditions in Khorasan on the northeastern frontier. In 1066/1656 the Kalmyks raided Astarabad/Estrābād. Uzbek incursions, a perennial problem, continued as well, intensifying in 1649-50 and flaring up again in 1652, 1656, and 1664-66. Yet none of these raids constituted a vital threat to the Safavid state (Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 569-70, 582; Chardin, X, pp. 67-68; Matthee, 2012, p. 127). Shah ʿAbbās sought to keep the tribal periphery quiet and loyal by allowing rebels to return to the Safavid fold and by giving them a stake in the system. He thus co-opted the Lezghis of Daghestan, granting them an annual stipend in return for a pledge to halt their incursions (Doury Efendy, p. 34; Picault, I, p. 180). He also made arrangements with the Uzbeks, awarding them a tributary subvention designed to buy their loyalty and to keep them from slave-raiding into Iranian territory.

In the Persian Gulf, a conflict with the VOC over the terms of its silk contract with the Safavids in 1055/1645 prompted the VOC to lay a naval blockade around Bandar-e ʿAbbās (q.v.), throttling Iran's maritime trade. This action was short-lived, as the Dutch, wary of their own commercial losses and the expense involved, gave in to Iranian demands, after which they ended up concluding a new silk treaty in 1062/1652 (Speelman, pp. 133 ff.; Floor and

Faghfoory, Matthee, 1999, pp. 147-58).

Exceptions to the relative tranquility of the shah's reign are the pacification of Georgia in 1038-39/1648-49, the expedition against Kandahar (q.v.) in 1038/1648, which the shah led in person, and the campaign against the Uzbeks, which he undertook shortly before his death. The first campaign involved Cossack depredations as well as appeals for Russian assistance by Teymuraz, the erstwhile viceroy (*wāli*) of Georgia, who sought to break free of Safavid domination. This led to the destruction of a number of Russian-built fortresses on the banks of the Qarya Su (Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 509-10; Luft, pp. 114-19; Matthee, 2013).

The expedition to Kandahar, which had been lost to the Mughals under Shah Ṣafi I, counts as Shah ʿAbbās II's main military venture and as the last significant military campaign of the Safavids. The shah's first attempt to mount an expedition, made shortly after his accession, came to naught. More serious efforts had to wait until the moment, in 1045/1635, when Shah ʿAbbās took full control of statecraft. In the summer of 1058/1648, an army of some 50,000 headed east. Traveling via Mashad, Herat, and Bost the Iranians laid siege to Kandahar in January 1649 and, after a brief siege, took the city on 11 February 1649. Despite Mughal attempts to recover Kandahar, the city and its province would remain in Safavid hands for the duration of the dynasty (Waḥid Qazvini, pp. 445 ff.; Waliqoli Šāmlu, fols. 329 ff.; Riazul Islam, pp. 110-14; Luft, pp. 133-39; Matthee, 2012, pp. 123-25). The Kandahar expedition showed up the weak state of the Safavid army and the woeful lack of money resulting from underlying economic problems. In order to remedy this situation, Shah ʿAbbās II took various measures designed to enhance tax revenue. His two main grand viziers, Ḵalifa Solṭān and Moḥammad Beg (q.v., in office 106-71/1654-61), actively sought to stem the outflow of money to India via the Persian Gulf ports by prohibiting the export of specie. These measures foundered on subterfuge, and, combined with a stagnating influx of silver from Ottoman lands, only precipitated a dramatic decrease in the availability of precious metal, leading to steep decline in the number of mints in this period (Matthee, 2012, pp. 86-94; Matthee, Floor, and Clawson, chap. 3).

The most important manifestation of the shah's efforts to increase the flow of revenue to the center is the expansion of crown **(***ḵāṣṣa*) land. Begun under Shah Ṭahmāsb (r. 930-84/1524-76) and greatly accelerated by Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 996-1038/1588-1629), the conversion of state lands to crown land culminated under Shah ʿAbbās II, reflecting a growing sense of military security, which

was reinforced when the Safavids made peace with the Ottomans in 1639. The driving force behind this policy was grand vizier Moḥammad Mirzā "Sāru" Taqi, who argued that, with the risk of war reduced, reliance on semi-independent governors was no longer necessary; therefore, state land should be appropriated by the crown (Chardin, V, pp. 251-53). In the years of Ḵalifa Solṭān's tenure as grand vizier (1055-64/1645-54), the reappearance of external threats, and especially the need for support from the country's Turkish tribal elements in the war over Kandahar, temporarily stalled the conversion of state land. In the later 1060s/1650s, a period of relative peace coinciding with mounting financial problems, the practice was resumed under the auspices of the newly appointed grand vizier Moḥammad Beg. Hamadān was added to the stock of *ḵāṣṣa* land in 1064/1654; Ardabil, Semnān and Ḵᵛār followed suit in 1066/1656-57, and Kermān in 1068/1658-59 (Wāleh Eṣfahāni, pp. 576-77; Waḥid Qazvini, pp. 566, 612; Röhrborn, pp. 37, 122; Matthee, 2012, pp. 148-49).

Shah ʿAbbās II was an energetic builder, although not on the scale of his great-grandfather. In 1052/1642, Mirzā Taqi was charged with the constructing of a reception hall (*tālār*) to the ʿĀli Qāpu (q.v.) building, a project that took three years to complete. His most important architectural achievement is the completion of the Čehel Sotun (q.v.) ceremonial palace in Isfahan with its wall decorations, most likely in 1646-47 (Babaie 1994; idem, 2008, pp. 182-97).

Following his success in regaining Kandahar, the shah appears to have lost his grip on power. In 1059/1649, still only in his late teens after seven dry years on the throne, he took up the cup during his triumphant return from the Kandahar campaign (Wāleh Eṣfahāni, p. 480). In 1063/1653, a time of great economic difficulty, the clerics managed to persuade the shah to ban alcohol once again (NA, VOC 1201, 16 August 1653; Matthee, 2005, pp. 85-90). Still, in the last twelve years of his reign and life the shah withdrew from direct state affairs to engage in the pleasures of the office at the expense of the execution of his duties. For much of this period, most of the shah's executive duties were performed by the forceful and energetic Moḥammad Beg.

Shah ʿAbbās II died, not yet thirty-five years old, on 20 Rabiʿ I 1077/25 September 1666 (or 26 Rabiʿ II 1077/26 October 1666) in Ašraf (present-day Behšahr), the winter resort town that Shah ʿAbbās I had built in Mazandaran. He was buried in Qom (NA, VOC 1255, fol. 818; on his death and burial, also see Waliqoli Šāmlu, II, fols. 22 ff.).

Contemporary observers offer different opinions about the cause of his death.

Chardin recounts the rumor that the shah might have been poisoned but thought it more plausible that he died from a neglected venereal disease (Chardin, IX, pp. 399-400, 417-18; also see Kaempfer, pp. 47-48). Tavernier attributed the death to an inflammation of the throat, the result of excessive drinking (Tavernier, I, p. 582). There is no contemporary confirmation for the report that the shah was baptized on his deathbed (Krusinksi, I, pp. 129-30). Shah ʿAbbās had two sons, Ṣafi Mirzā and Ḥamza Mirzā, the younger one. The former would succeed him as Shah Ṣafi II, re-crowned Shah Solaymān in 1078/1667. A surviving sister, Pari-roḵsār Ḵānom, who was kept in the harem, was later married to the brother of her sister's husband, the *ṣadr-e ḵāṣṣa* (Chardin, IX, p. 564).

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