



‘AKKĀS-BĀŠĪ

‘AKKĀS-BĀŠĪ, EBRĀHĪM (family name later, Moṣawwer Raḥmānī), photographer and pioneer motion-picture cameraman, b. Raḡab, 1291/August, 1874, d. 1333/1915. Mīrzā Ebrāhīm’s father, Mīrzā Aḡmad Ṣanī’-al-salṭana (b. 1264/1848), converted to the Baha’i faith and corresponded with ‘Abd-al-Bahā’, who named him Moṣawwer Raḥmānī “the divine illustrator.” He left Iran secretly in the company of Mo’ayyer-al-mamālek, Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah’s son-in-law, and spent seven years in Europe learning photography, porcelain-making, and engraving; in July, 1884, he became a member of the Grand-Orient de France Masonic lodge. On his return to Iran, he served as Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah’s chief photographer (‘akkās-bāšī). At the age of fourteen, Mīrzā Ebrāhīm accompanied his father to Europe and also studied photography and engraving. On his return to Iran, he was posted to the court of the crown prince, Moṣaffar-al-dīn, at Tabrīz. After coming to the throne, Moṣaffar-al-dīn gave the sister of his wife, Zīvar-al-solṭān Ṭal’at-al-salṭana, in marriage to Mīrzā Ebrāhīm and conferred on him the title ‘akkās-bāšī (*farmān* dated Jomādā II, 1315/December, 1897). On the shah’s first visit to Europe in 1317-18/1900, Mīrzā Ebrāhīm accompanied him as photographer. On July 8 during his stay at the French spa of Contrexeville, the shah had his first taste of cinematography (*Avvalīn safar-nāma*, pp. 100-01) and ordered ‘Akkās-bāšī to buy and use a Gaumont motion-picture camera. ‘Akkās-bāšī set about his task and, among other things, filmed the flower festival at Oostende in Belgium on 21 Rabī’ II/18 August (*Avvalīn safar-nāma*, p. 160). Undated letters written by Moṣaffar-al-dīn Shah indicate that after ‘Akkās-bāšī’s return to Tehran he was ordered to film the lions at the royal zoo at Faraḡbād and the Moḡarram



processions in the Sabza-maydān (F. Gaffary, *Le cinéma en Iran*, Tehran, 1973, p. 2). These first Iranian films are lost. ‘Akkās-bāšī appears to have been not only the first Iranian cameraman, but also the first to project films at the royal court and in private homes. He accompanied the shah on his second journey to Europe in 1320/1902; all photographs in the shah’s two travel diaries are by him. He brought back with him a movable-type printing press and founded the K̄voršīd printing firm in Tehran. He wrote, translated, and printed many books on such matters as ethics, sports, and housekeeping. After Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah’s death he left the court and devoted most of his time to farming land which he owned with his younger brother, Taqī Khan Ṣanī‘-al-solṭān, near Karaĵ; occasionally he gave film shows at his home to friends. He moved to Gīlān for further farming and eventually died there in 1333/1915. He had a son and four daughters, one of whom, Ma‘šūma, became the wife of Ja‘far Pīšavarī, the Iranian communist leader.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Documents in the possession of the Moṣawwer Raḥmānī family.

Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah, *Avvalīn safar-nāma*, Tehran, 1319/1901, pp. 126, 146.

Idem, *Dovvomīn safar-nāma*, Tehran, 1320/1902, p. 36 and captions of photographs.

Badāye‘-e waqāye‘-e noḳostīn safar-e Moẓaffar-al-dīn Šāh, Tehran, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 4, 48, 68, 69, 86, 104.

F. Ġaffārī, “Avvalīn āzmāyešhā-ye sīnemā‘ī dar Īrān,” *Majālla-ye ‘ālam-e honar*, no. 25, Mehr, 1330 Š./September-October, 1951.