



EBRĀHĪM MĪRZĀ

EBRĀHĪM MĪRZĀ, Safavid prince, patron, artist, and poet generally referred to as Solṭān Ebrāhīm Mīrzā (b. Du'l-qa'da 946/April 1540; d. 5 Du'l-ḥejja 984/23 February 1577).

As grandson of Shah Esmā'īl, son of prince Bahrām Mīrzā, and nephew (and eventually son-in-law) of Shah Ṭahmāsb, Ebrāhīm Mīrzā was almost naturally destined to be involved with the literary and visual arts. As with other members of the Safavid family, the prince's artistic activities were quite varied, including the composition of poetry, the practice of calligraphy and painting, the sponsorship of poets, musicians, calligraphers, and other artists and of a *ketāb-kāna* (library), and the commissioning of deluxe manuscripts (Qāzī Aḥmad, pp. 106-19, 143-44; tr. Minorsky, pp. 3-11, 155-64, 183-84).

His training took place at the Safavid court with Ṭahmāsb taking a direct interest in his education. In 962/1554-55 the shah appointed him governor of Mašhad; the official *farmān* charges the then sixteen-year-old prince with supervising the city's governmental and financial affairs and other general responsibilities (Kūzānī, fols. 216a-218b). Ebrāhīm Mīrzā arrived in Mašhad in Jomādā I 963/March 1556. At about this time he was betrothed to Ṭahmāsb's eldest daughter, Gowhar-Solṭān Kānom; the marriage was consummated in the spring of 967/1560. Toward the end of 970/1562-63 he left Mašhad to take up the governorship of Ardabīl. En route, he seems to have condoned a joking remark about his new appointment that angered Ṭahmāsb (Qāzī Aḥmad, *Kolāša* I, p. 440). As a result, the posting to Ardabīl was withdrawn, and Ebrāhīm Mīrzā was sent instead to govern the small town of Qā'en in



Khorasan. This period of royal reprimand did not last very long, however, and by 973/1565-66 he was reinstated to his previous position at Mašhad. Within a year or two Ṭahmāsb removed the prince from Mašhad for the second and final time, apparently for his failure to assist in rescuing the shah's besieged son Solṭān Moḥammad Mīrzā, and sent him to serve as governor in Sabzavār. (A full account of Ebrāhīm Mīrzā's change of fortunes is given by Āsofta Naṭanzī, pp. 49-51.) In Ramaẓān 982/December 1574 the prince was recalled to the Safavid court at Qazvīn and appointed grand master of ceremonies (*ešīk-āqāsī-bāšī*). He was actively embroiled in the struggle for power following Ṭahmāsb's death in Šafar 984/May 1576, in the end supporting Esmā'īl II, who rewarded him with the position of keeper of the royal seal (*mohrdār*). Not long thereafter Ebrāhīm Mīrzā began to fall out of royal favor, and in less than a year he was murdered, along with other Safavid princes, on order of 'Esmā'īl II (Qāẓī Aḥmad, *Ḳolāša* II, p. 634; Ḥasan Rūmlū, ed. Navā'ī, pp. 632-33, ed. and tr. Seddon, II, pp. 207-08; Eskandar Beg, I, p. 209, tr., I, p. 310).

Ebrāhīm Mīrzā emerged as a major patron of the arts at about the start of his original appointment to Mašhad, and he apparently spent much of his time as governor in the company of poets, musicians, composers, calligraphers, and painters. Among the literary and performing artists in his circle were the poet Tanā'ī Mašhadī and the musicians Solṭān Maḥmūd Ṭanbūra'ī and Qāsem Qānūnī of Herat (Qāẓī Aḥmad, pp. 110, 112-14, tr. Minorsky, pp. 158-59, 163-64; Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 181-82, 191, tr., I, pp. 276, 281). The greatest legacy of his patronage in the visual arts is a magnificent volume of Jāmī's *Haft ovrang* dated 963-972/1556-65 and illustrated with twenty-eight paintings (Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, 46.12). That the prince's subsequent resources as a patron were considerably reduced is evidenced by a modest manuscript of the *Naqš-e badī'* of Ġazālī Mašhadī with two illustrations completed in Sabzavār in Moḥarram 982/April-May 1574 (Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayı Library, R. 1038).

The colophons in Ebrāhīm Mīrzā's two surviving manuscripts specify that both were made by order of his library, indicating that the prince maintained an artistic workshop-cum-library during good times and bad (Farhad and Simpson, pp. 287-88; Simpson, 1993, pp. 106-10, 115-16; idem, forthcoming). Altogether nine individuals are documented as having worked for this library. They include the calligraphers Šāh-Maḥmūd Nīšābūrī, Rostam-'Alī, Moḥebb-'Alī (who served for a time as Ebrāhīm Mīrzā's *ketābdār* "librarian"), Mālek Deylamī, 'Ayšī b. 'Ešratī, and Solṭān Moḥammad Ḳandān. Three other artists in



the prince's employ were noted primarily as painters and/or illuminators: 'Abd-Allāh Šīrāzī, Shaikh Moḥammad, and 'Alī-As'āgar (Simpson, 1982, pp. 93, 98, 103 n. 38; idem, 1993, pp. 159-60; idem, forthcoming).

Ebrāhīm Mīrzā had a reputation as an artist in his own right, and is said to have been gifted in many aspects of the manuscript arts, including calligraphy, illumination, painting, and bookbinding (Qāzī Aḥmad, pp. 106, 115, 143; tr. Minorsky, pp. 155, 159-60; Simpson, forthcoming). The prince also had a life-long passion for poetry and composed verses in both Persian and Turkish. Several thousand lines of his poems, comprising *qaṣīdas* and *ʔazals* in Persian and pieces in Turkish (*torkīyāt*) were compiled posthumously as a *dīvān*, of which two copies survive today (Tehran, Golestān Library, 2183, and Geneva, collection of Sadruddin Aga Khan, MS 33).

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