



ESMĀ'IL II

ESMĀ'IL II (b. 31 May 1537, Qom; d. 24 November 1577, Qazvin), the third Safavid monarch (r. 984-85/1576-77).

Born on the night of Thursday 21 *Ḍu'l-ḥejja* 943/31 May 1537 in **Qom** (Kāmi-Qazvini, fol. 144r; Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 950), Esmā'il Mirzā (later Esmā'il II) was the second son of **Ṭahmāsp I** (930-84/1524-76). His mother, **Ḳadam-'Ali Solṭān Ḳānom**, also known as Solṭānom Begum (d. 1002/1594), came from the Mawṣellu, the paramount clan of the left wing of the **Aq Qoyunlu** tribal confederation (Monši-Torkmān, pp. 125, 490, tr. pp. 206, 666; *Tāriḳ-e Qezelbāšān*, pp. 21-22; Woods, pp. 191-92). At the time of Esmā'il Mirzā's birth, his maternal uncle, Musā Sultan Mawṣellu, acted as governor of Tabriz (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 223; Monši-Qazvini, pp. 72-73; Bedlisi, II, p. 252). Musā Sultan is commonly but erroneously assumed to be Esmā'il Mirzā's maternal grandfather (Hinz, p. 25; Szuppe, 1994, pp. 232, 234; idem, 1996, p. 83; Woods, p. 193). **Ḳadam-'Ali** and Musā were indeed the daughter and son of 'Isā Khan b. Bakr Beg b. Begtāš Beg Mowṣellu and, as such, were related to Ṭahmāsp I's mother, Šāh-Begi Ḳānom, also known as Tājlu Begum (d. 947/1540) (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 219, 223, 288; Monši-Torkman, p. 490; tr., p. 666). Later in the 16th century, their younger brother, Amir Khan II served as governor of **Hamadān** (Jonābadi, p. 576). The Venetian envoy, Vincenzo Alessandri, who visited Qazvin in the latter part of the 16th century, asserts that in 1572 Esmā'il Mirzā was forty years old (Alessandri, p. 169). A few years later, the Venetian consul in Damascus, Teodoro Balbi (p. 283), reported that Esmā'il II was aged 44 at the time of his death. Drawing on both Venetian sources, Walther Hinz (p. 25) and,



subsequently, Roger M. Savory (p. 188) suggested the year 940/1533-34 as Esmā'il Mirzā's date of birth, which, as stated above, is not correct. "Abu'l-Manşur" and "Abu'l-Faḥ" were Esmā'il Mirzā's official epithets under Ṭahmāsp I (*Majmu'a makātib*, fols. 145v, 171v; Navā'i, pp. 181, 206; Ivoġli, fol. 112r; Ḥayāti-Tabrizi, fol. 76r; Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 376).

In the wake of [Alqās Mirzā](#)'s escape to the Ottoman Empire, Esmā'il Mirzā was made, late in the summer of 954/1547, governor of [Şervān](#) (Rumlu, p. 1309; Qawāmi-Şirāzi, p. 97; Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 321; Kuzāni-Eşfahāni, fol. 133r; Jonābadi, p. 508), a hotbed of political unrest and rebellion at the time. Soon after Esmā'il Mirzā's arrival in the province, his guardian (*lala*), Gökča Sultan Ziādlu Qājār, also known as Şāhverdi Sultan (d. 962/1555), together with Ṭahmāsp I's brother-in-law, 'Abd-Allāh Khan Ostājlu, mounted a military campaign against Borhān-'Ali b. Qalil-Allāh II (d. 955/1548), a nephew of Ṭahmāsp I and claimant to the [Şervānşāhid](#) throne (Qavāmi-Şirāzi, p. 103; Rumlu, pp. 1313-1314; Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 323; Bedlisi, II, pp. 202-3; Hinz, pp. 26-27; Kırzioġlu, pp. 184, 205). There is ample archival and narrative evidence that the Ottomans backed Borhān-'Ali in anticipation of the establishment of a puppet Sunni state in Şervān (*Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H. 951-952 Tarihli ve E-12321 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, documents no. 451 and 453, pp. 327-29; Celālzāde, fols. 310r-v; Kırzioġlu, p. 178; Posch, pp. 656-57).

Esmā'il Mirzā's stay in Şervān lasted about a year. On 10 Rajab 955/25 August 1548, he tagged along with his guardian, Gökča Sultan, during the capture and destruction of Kars, a strategically important fortress town along the border between [Erzurum](#) and [Georgia](#) (Ivoġli, fol. 112r; *Majmu'a makātib*, fol. 171v; Navā'i, p. 181). Gökča Sultan and Esmā'il Mirzā commanded an army of 7,000 troops. They entered Kars in Jomādā I 955/July-August 1548, where the Safavid troops ransacked the city, killing scores of civilian refugees, who had fled the chaos and disorder that ensued in central and eastern Anatolia following the joint campaign of Alqāş Mirzā and the Ottoman Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent (1520-66) against [Azarbaijan](#) and 'Erāq-e 'Ajam. In Kars, there was an attempt on Esmā'il Mirzā's life allegedly plotted by the Ottoman governor of the city, 'Otmān Pasha. In retaliation, the Safavid troops massacred all Ottoman prisoners of war and razed the fortress of Kars to the ground (*Majmu'a makātib*, fol. 124v; Navā'i, p. 241; Şafavi, p. 55; Rumlu, p. 1320; Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 330; Ḥosayni, p. 171; Kuzāni-Eşfahāni, fols. 136r-136v; Hinz, pp. 27-28).

Shortly after Alqāş Mirzā's arrest in Marivān castle and his subsequent

imprisonment in Qahqaha, a mountainous fortress in Qarājadāg some fifty miles northwest of Ardabil, Esmā'il Mirzā's other paternal uncle, **Bahrām Mirzā**, who was expected to act as the next heir apparent to Ṭahmāsp I died in Qazvin on 19 Ramazān 956/21 October 1549 (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 340; Jonābadi, pp. 514-15, 517-18; Ḥosayni, pp. 175-76). According to Fażli Beg Kuzāni-Eşfahāni (fols. 141r, 142r), who is the sole chronicler to make such a claim, it was immediately after Bahrām Mirzā's death that Ṭahmāsp I recalled Prince Esmā'il from Šervān and made him crown prince and generalissimo (*sepahsālār*) of his troops in Qazvin. In 959/1552, Esmā'il Mirzā and Gökča Sultan led a contingent of Qezelbāš emirs and their retainers during a major offensive against Erzurum, where the Safavid invaders inflicted serious losses on the Ottoman garrison (Şafavi, p. 64; Rumlu, pp. 1354-1360; Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 356-59; Kuzāni-Eşfahāni, fols. 159r-161r; Jonābadi, p. 536; Hinz, pp. 29-32). Similarly, in 960/1553 and 961/1554, Esmā'il Mirzā participated in a series of military campaigns against various pro-Ottoman elements in Kurdistan, eastern Anatolia, and Georgia (*Majmu'a makātib*, fols. 145r-v; Navā'i, pp. 205-6; Rumlu, pp. 1367, 1372; Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 362, 367-69; Kuzāni-Eşfahāni, fols. 165r-166v).

Esmā'il Mirzā married his cousin Şafiya Solţān Kānom, a daughter of Šāh Nur-al-Din Ne'mat-Allāh Bāqi Kermāni (d. 972/1565) and his paternal aunt, the Safavid princess Kāneş Kānom (d. 972/1565), in early 962/1555. Esmā'il Mirzā's flings with male lovers during this period are briefly discussed in a caustic letter dating 985/1577 penned by his older sister, princess Pari Khan Kānom (*Jong*, fols. 88r-v). Soon after their wedding ceremony, which was held at the Šemāl and 'Eşratābād gardens in Tabriz, Esmā'il Mirzā and his young wife moved to Qazvin, the new Safavid capital, where he was given the house previously owned by his late paternal uncle, Bahrām Mirzā (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 376-77; Rumlu, p. 1388; Qawāmi-Širāzi, p. 109; Bedlisi, II, p. 207; Kermāni et al., p. 227; Monši-Torkmān, p. 132; tr., p. 214; Hinz, pp. 33-34). Esmā'il Mirzā had one daughter from this marriage, who later was married off to Šāh Kalil-Allāh Kermāni (Kermāni et al., p. 236). In 984/1576, Esmā'il Mirzā married three consorts and from one of them had one son, named Šojā'-al-Din Moḥammad, born in Moḥarram 985/March-April 1577. He appointed his newborn son as governor of **Fārs** in the same year (Monši-Torkmān, pp. 206, 213, 220; tr., pp. 306, 316, 328; Monajjem-Yazdi, p. 34; Afušta'i-Naţanzi, p. 55).

Esmā'il Mirzā's pedophilia played a decisive role in his undoing, which occurred in 962/1555, less than a year after his settlement in Qazvin. In a



lyrical poem, he confirms that it was upon arrival in Qazvin that “I lost the comfort of good life, and became afflicted by pain and agony,” which can be taken as an allegorical reference to his downfall, as well as to his scandalous love affairs with male companions (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 655). It is reported that Ṭahmāsp I was about to promote Esmā'īl Mirzā to governor of Hamadān in 956/1549; but before this appointment was officially announced, the Safavid prince broke a leg during an outing with a male companion late in the winter of 962/1555. The news of this incident excited Ṭahmāsp's outrage to the effect that he demoted Esmā'īl Mirzā to governor of [Herat](#), ordering him to leave Qazvin unceremoniously. On 6 Rabi' II 962/10 March 1555, Esmā'īl Mirzā departed for Herat, where his father's brother-in-law, Moḥammad Khan Šaraf-al-Din Oḡli Tekelu (d. 964/1557), had been instructed to act as his new guardian (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 379-81; Rumlu, p. 1395; Qawāmi-Širāzi, p. 110; Szuppe, 1996, p. 83).

Esmā'īl Mirzā arrived in Herat on 23 Jomādā I 963/14 April 1556 (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 384; Jonābadi, pp. 543-44). During the year intervening between his departure from Qazvin and arrival in Herat, he toured various cities of Khorasan, including Sabzavār, Toršiz, Zāvah, Maḥvalāt, K'āf, [Bākarz](#), and Ġuriān, deliberately avoiding a visit to the holy shrine of imam 'Ali b. [Musā al-Rezā](#) in Mashhad, the city that had recently been assigned to his paternal cousin, [Ebrāhim Mirzā](#) b. Bahrām Mirzā (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 385). It is reported that during Esmā'īl Mirzā's short tenure as governor of Herat, many Sunni learned and landed notables, who had fled Khorasan early in the reign of Shah Ṭahmāsp, were allowed resettlement in the city. The Safavid prince's pro-Sunni policies in Herat were soon to be exploited by his enemies in Qazvin who used the occasion to persuade Shah Ṭahmāsp to recall him from Khorasan (Kāmi-Qazvini, fol. 144r). According to Šaraf Khan Bedlisi (II, p. 208), it was the outbreak of a bitter feud between Moḥammad Khan Tekelu and his elder son, Zayn-al-Din 'Ali Sultan, a close friend and maternal cousin of Prince Esmā'īl Mirzā, that prompted Ṭahmāsp I to recall his son from Khorasan in less than two years. During Esmā'īl Mirzā's stay in Khorasan, Zayn al-Din 'Ali Sultan Tekelu was arrested and tortured to death in Qazvin on account of complicity in the Safavid prince's disgraceful flings with consenting boys (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 386; Qawāmi-Širāzi, p. 110; Hinz, p. 35).

On 27 Jomādā I 964/7 April 1557, Esmā'īl Mirzā was escorted by the *qurči-bāši* or commander-in-chief of cavalry, Sevendik Beg Afšār, from Herat to Qazvin via Ṭabas, Yazd, and [Kashan](#). Before his arrival in Sāva, a town some hundred

miles southeast of Qazvin, a number of his allies and backers at court, including one Bayāt and two Zu'l-Qadr emirs, were nabbed and put to death in Qazvin. Ṭahmāsp I did not allow Esmā'il Mirzā entry to Qazvin, charging Sevendik Beg with the task of detaining him in Sāva. In Ša'bān 964/June-July 1557, the Safavid monarch instructed his deputy (*wakil*), Jalāl-al-Din Ma'šum Beg Šeykāvand (d. 976/1569), to take Esmā'il Mirzā to Qahqaha. Afterwards, a group of Ostājlu emirs were posted to Qahqaha Castle to serve as prison guards (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 388; Bedlisi, II, p. 209; Qawāmi-Širāzi, p. 111; Jonābadi, pp. 545-47; Hinz, pp. 37-38).

Esmā'il Mirzā languished in jail for close to two decades—or nineteen years, six months, and twenty-one days, as Eskandar Beg Monši-Torkmān (p. 133; tr., p. 214) puts it. In one of the few quatrains attributed to Esmā'il Mirzā in the Persian *tazkera* literature, the Safavid prince laments forlornly over his incarceration in Qahqaha, ascribing it to his foes' resentment at his prowess and insight (Afšār, p. 12). Under Ṭahmāsp I, part of the prison cells at Qahqaha was used as storage space for the royal treasury's gold and silver reserves. According to Ḥosayni-Qomi (p. 654), the stockpiling of gold and silver bullion was carried out with the objective of providing instant cash for the world-conquering stalwarts of the [Hidden Imam](#) upon his imminent advent (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 654). Towards the end of Esmā'il Mirzā's detention, six hundred bars of gold and silver, each weighing about 10 kilograms, are reported to have been stacked in those prison cells. In 979/1571, a couple of these gold and silver bars were lost, prompting Ṭahmāsp I to launch an independent inquiry into the matter. The Ostājlu prison guards and their relatives in Qazvin were swift to put the blame on Esmā'il Mirzā. Yet their opponents at court, including the Tekelu, Turkmān, Rumlu, and Afšār military chiefs, accused the Ostājlu and their allies of swindling the central treasury out of the much-needed reserves of gold and silver (Bedlisi, II, p. 243). In fact, early in the 1570s, price inflation had disrupted the routine of everyday life in several urban centers in Iran, forcing Ṭahmāsp I to instruct bureaucratic authorities across the country to collect and send to Qazvin as much gold and silver coinage and bullion as they could get their hands on, so that the Safavid mint in Qazvin could use it as base metal for a new coinage (Tatavi and Qazvini, VIII, p. 5909). This episode shows that, by the end of the reign of Ṭahmāsp I, the factional divide at court that shaped Esmā'il Mirzā's ascent to the throne in the summer of 984/1576 had taken its definitive form.

Ṭahmāsp I died on 15 Šafar 984/24 May 1576 with no crown prince designated



to inherit the throne (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 592). Two factions had already formed at court in the years leading up to his death, one led by a fragile coalition of the Ostājlu, Qājār, Šaykāvand, and Georgian emirs, who backed Prince Ḥaydar Mirzā, the fifth son of Shah Ṭahmāsp (born to a Georgian Princess on 13 Du'l-Qa'da 963/28 September 1556), and the other by the Afšār, Torkmān, Tekelu, and Rumlu supporters of Esmā'il Mirzā, led by his younger sister, Princess [Pari Khan Kānom](#) (Monši-Torkmān, pp. 133, 193; tr., pp. 215, 284-85; Jonābadi, pp. 576-75). During the clashes that erupted at court following Ṭahmāsp I's death, Ḥaydar Mirzā was arrested inside the royal harem and put to death on the spot at the hands of a group of his opponents on the night of Wednesday 16 Šafar 984/25 May 1576, an incident that cleared the way for Esmā'il Mirzā's ascent to the throne (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 605; Monajjem-Yazdi, pp. 28-29; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 19-23; Roemer, p. 251). The backers of Esmā'il Mirzā reckoned on his achievements as a military commander under Ṭahmāsp I and were under the impression that his seizure of political power “will subdue the internal and external enemies of the religion and the state” (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 602).

It was under these circumstances that on 22 Šafar 984/31 May 1576 Esmā'il Mirzā was released from the Qahqaha fortress and joined by thousands of Qezelbāš cavalymen on his way first to Ardabil and then to Qazvin. Before making it to Qazvin, Esmā'il Mirzā spent a few days in Asiābrud, a small scenic village in [Manjil](#) some ninety miles northwest of Qazvin. The court astrologer, Mollā Eliās Ardabili, had come up with an auspicious date for the Safavid prince's entrance to the city, but Esmā'il Mirzā rushed to the Sa'adatābād garden, ignoring the auspicious date set for this occasion (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 617-21; Monši-Qazvini, pp. 163-65). Esmā'il II was enthroned on Wednesday, 27 Jomādā I 984/1 September 1576. The coronation ceremony was held at the [Čehel Sotun](#) palace in Qazvin in the presence of his brothers, cousins, court bureaucrats, religious dignitaries, and Qezelbāš tribal and military chiefs. The chief magistrate (*moḥtaseb al-mamālek*), Sayyed 'Ali Kaṭīb Astarābādi, and the prayer imam (*pišnamāz*) at court, Mir Raḥmat-Allāh Najafi, presided over Esmā'il II's ascent to the throne (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 626; Monši-Torkmān, pp. 146, 150; tr., pp. 233-34, 240; Monajjem-Yazdi, pp. 32-33; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 23-27). A few days before his enthronement, he ordered the demolition of almost all royal residential buildings at the Sa'adatābād garden.

The Mawšellu and the Tekelu were among Esmā'il II's most trusted emirs, and upon his rise to power many of them took over key administrative positions in

various cities of Iran, including Qazvin, Qom, Naṭanz, and [Ardestān](#) (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 627). Furthermore, Esmā'īl II's rise to power paved the way for the comeback of a cohort of disgruntled bureaucrats and religious scholars from [Isfahan](#) and [Shiraz](#), whose career advancement had been stymied under Ṭahmāsp I (Aubin, pp. 79-80). On 30 Rabi' I 984/7 July 1576, Esmā'īl II made Šokr-Allāh Eṣfahāni his grand vizier. The same day, he appointed Šāhroḡ Khan Zu'l-Qadr, a Qezelbāš emir from Shiraz and one of his former cellmates at Qahqaha, as chief military prosecutor or *divānbeygi*. Also, Mirzā Moḥammad Ma'muri, a high-ranking bureaucrat from Isfahan who had been let go under Ṭahmāsp I, was promoted to chief scribe (*monši al-mamālek*) (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 623, 627; Monši-Torkmān, p. 163; tr., p. 255; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, p. 29). Under Esmā'īl II, the grand vizier, Šokr-Allāh Eṣfahāni, and Prince Ebrāhim Mirzā acted as chief judge at the Safavid court, while Mir 'Enāyat-Allāh Naqib-Eṣfahāni held the post of military judge (*qāzi-e mo'askar*) (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 624, 628). Šokr-Allāh Eṣfahāni was soon discharged, and on 26 Rabi' I 984/3 July 1576 [Mirzā Salmān Jāberi-Eṣfahāni](#) took over the post of grand vizier. On the same day, Mir 'Enāyat-Allāh Naqib-Eṣfahāni was made *šadr* or minister of religious affairs; he was intended to work in collaboration with Mirzā Maḡdum Šarifi-Širāzi, a popular, crypto-Sunni preacher and close ally of Princess Pari Khan Kānom in Qazvin. Afterwards, Šokr-Allāh was appointed as *mostawfi al-mamālek* or chief director of scribal/financial affairs (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 648; Ivoḡli, fols. 128v-129v; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, p. 53; Monši-Torkmān, pp. 148-49, 212; tr., pp. 237, 315; Qazvini, p. 59). Esmā'īl II's maternal uncle, Amir Khan II, acted as his deputy (*wakil*) (Jonābadi, p. 546). In Rajab 985/September-October 1577, Esmā'īl II reinstated the rebel ruler of [Gilān](#) and a former cellmate of his at Qahqaha, Neẓām-al-Din Khan Aḡmad b. Solṭān-Ḥasan Gilāni (d. 1009/1601), as governor of [Lāhijān](#) (*Majmu'a makātib*, fols. 256v-258r; Gilāni, pp. 86-88; Navā'i, pp. 135-37).

Less than two months after his enthronement, Esmā'īl II ordered the execution of all male members of the royal family. His older, near-blind brother, Prince Solṭān-Moḥammad, together with his three sons, including newborn 'Abbās Mirzā (later ['Abbās I](#)), was the sole survivor of the bloodshed that decimated the Safavid royal household (Monajjem-Yazdi, pp. 37-38; Bayāt, pp. 131-32; Browne, IV, pp. 98-99). On 7 Ša'bān 985/9 November 1576, the Safavid princes Solaymān Mirzā and Moṣṭafā Mirzā were beheaded in Qazvin. Six months later, on 7 Du'l-ḥejja 984/7 March 1577, Esmā'īl II's younger brothers and cousins, including Maḡmud Mirzā, Emāmqoli Mirzā, Aḡmad Mirzā, and Moḥammad Ḥosayn Mirzā, were put to sword (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 628, 632;



Monajjem-Yazdi, pp. 34-35, 40-41; Jonābadi, pp. 578-80). Two days before their execution, on 5 Dū'l-ḥejja 984/5 March 1577, the shah ordered the beheading of his cousin and brother-in-law, Ebrāhim Mirzā, the most prominent Safavid prince present at court (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 633-43; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 45-47, 51; Monajjem-Yazdi, p. 35; Jonābadi, pp. 579-80). On the same day, the Safavid monarch ordered the massacre of about five hundred Qezelbāš Sufis, who had recently arrived in Qazvin from eastern and central Anatolia (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 643; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, p. 34). On 4 Moḥarram 985/3 April 1577, Prince Badi' al-Zamān Mirzā, who ruled in Sistān, was murdered at the 'Avaž garden in [Qandahar](#) by order of Esmā'il II (Sistāni, pp. 190-91; Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 644).

In his polemical writings, Mirzā Maḳdum Šarifi-Širāzi clarifies that at first Esmā'il II was unwilling to kill his brothers and cousins; but after long discussions he managed to convince the shah to proceed with the executions, justifying them from the religious viewpoint based on the Shi'i practice of temporary marriage, which for Sunni Muslims was tantamount to adultery. According to Šarifi-Širāzi, he reminded Esmā'il II that almost all male descendants of the first two Safavid monarchs were born from temporary marriages and as such were bastards. From the jurisprudential evidence presented by Šarifi-Širāzi, Esmā'il II had inferred that the killing of his relatives was permissible (Šarifi-Širāzi, fol. 103r).

Esmā'il II's most enduring legacy was his espousal of Sunni Islam and mistreatment of leading Shi'i clerics in Safavid Iran. In Jomādā I 984/August-September 1576, he laid off all *waqf* superintendents appointed by Ṭahmāsp I and put the administration of religious endowments under the supervision of central bureaucracy (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 623; Mazzaoui, p. 53). Moreover, he sacked all provincial judges in the same month, assigning the adjudication of legal cases all over Iran to a select group of bureaucrats and judges in Qazvin (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 625; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 39-40). Under Esmā'il II, two prominent *mojtaheds* in Qazvin, 'Abd-al-'Āli b. Nur-al-Din 'Ali al-Karaki (d. 993/1585) and Sayyed Ḥosayn Karaki (d. 1001/1593), were disgraced, persecuted, and forced to quit Qazvin. Ḥosayn Karaki was a close ally of the slain Prince Ḥaydar Mirzā and from the outset opposed Esmā'il II's ascent to the throne (Monajjem-Yazdi, p. 29). Initially, it was rumored that the shah was plotting to poison both clerics. Before long, 'Abd al-'Āli Karaki fled to Hamadān, but Sayyed Ḥosayn was detained and his private library and house were confiscated. Esmā'il II then instructed Mir Maḳdum Šarifi-Širāzi to grant the cash realized from the sale of his house and library to religious scholars

with indelible Sunni background (Afandi-Eṣbahāni, II, p. 72; Monši-Torkmān, p. 215, tr. 320; Savory; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 41-42; K̄ānsāri, II, pp. 322-23; Ḥosayni-Āmeli, p. 229).

To cap all this, Esmā'il II banned the practice of *tawallā wa tabarrā* or public cursing of Sunni caliphs, imams, and religious scholars (Monši-Torkmān, pp. 213-14, tr. p. 319; Monajjem-Yazdi, pp. 34-35; Ḥosayni-Monši, p. 409; Ḥosayni-Āmeli, p. 229; Roemer, p. 252; Stanfield-Johnson, pp. 65-67). In the short run, the ban on public cursing of Sunni grandees spawned an urban riot in Qazvin led by the Safavid monarch's maternal uncle and deputy, Amir Khan II Mawṣellu (Jonābedi, p. 584). Additionally, the Safavid monarch ordered that the names of the Shi'i imams be removed from the walls of the main congregational mosque in Qazvin. He also had new coins minted in Qazvin without the names of the Shi'i imams (Monši-Torkmān, pp. 215, 217; tr., pp. 320, 324; Bayāt, p. 132; Mazzaoui, p. 54; Moširi, pp. 92-95). During the months leading up to his sudden death, Esmā'il II used the gold and silver reserves stockpiled by Ṭahmāsp I to pay generous cash grants to a number of Sayyed notables, including the Inju'i Sayyids of Shiraz (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 654-55).

Esmā'il II had planned to resume the official dispatch of hajj pilgrims from Iran to the Ottoman empire. Since 976/1569, when Jalāl-al-Din Ma'ṣum Beg Ṣaykāvand was murdered by a group of Bedouin "bandits" on his way to join the hajj caravans in Damascus, the Safavid authorities had stopped authorizing the en-masse passage of hajj pilgrims to the Ottoman empire. In an undated letter to the Mughal Prince Faridun Moḥammad-Ḥakim Mirzā, a brother of Emperor Akbar (r. 963-1014/1556-1605), who had asked for the Safavid monarch's permission to make his way to the Hejāz via Iran, Esmā'il II writes about his determination to ease the movement of hajj pilgrims from Iran to the Ottoman empire (Ivoḡlu, fols. 128r-v; *Majmu'a makātib*, fols. 182r-183v; Navā'i, pp. 503-5).

Esmā'il II's pro-Sunni policies soon alarmed the Qezelbāš emirs as well as the most influential female member of the royal family, Pari Khan Kānom, motivating them to act as a clique of conspirators bent on staging a regicide (Jonābadi, pp. 584-85; Gholsorkhi, 1995, pp. 152-53). During this period, Esmā'il II had put Pari Khan Kānom under house arrest in Qazvin, and from a letter by Pari Khan Kānom, we know that he was planning to kill her (*Jong*, fols. 87r-89v). Esmā'il II's heavy addiction to drugs and narcotics helped them effectuate their plot deftly. On the night of 13 Ramaṣān 985/24 November 1577, the Safavid monarch consumed slices of poisoned opium before getting to bed



with his male companion, a young boy named Ḥasan Beg Ḥalvāči-oğli 'Arabgirlu. Next morning, the courtiers found him dead, cradled by his male lover (Monši-Torkmān, pp. 218-19, tr. pp. 328-30; Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 653-54; Monajjem-Yazdi, pp. 38-39; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 60-61; Jonābadi, p. 585). For a while, Esmā'il II's death remained a mystery, feeding widespread rumors about his disappearance and escape to the mountains of Lorestān and Isfahan. During the closing years of the 16th century, the Dehdašt fortress in Kohgiluyā was the scene of a major rebellion headed by a certain Šāhmir-e Qalandar, who is reported to have called himself Shah Esmā'il II (Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 113-20; Ḥosayni-Monši, pp. 414-21; Širāzi, fols. 50r-v).

On the morning of Monday 14 Ramaẓān 985/25 November 1577, Esmā'il II's body was buried in the shrine of Emānzāda Ḥosayn in Qazvin (Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 653; Modarresi-Ṭabāṭabā'i, p. 64). He was a talented *nasta'liq* calligrapher and painter, and wrote poetry under pen name 'Ādeli (Kāmi-Qazvini, fol. 144r; Ḥosayni-Qomi, p. 655; Šādeqi Beg, pp. 10-11). Esmā'il II is eulogized by a number of contemporary chroniclers as a just ruler, whose reign brought a short period of stability and security to Iran (Ḥosayni-Qomi, pp. 654-55; Afušta'i-Naṭanzi, pp. 57-58). But the mainstream chroniclers such as Ḥasan Rumlu (p. 1544) and Eskandar Beg Monši-Torkmān (pp. 212-21) portray him as an irrational, perverted, and inept ruler, who brought the Safavid dynasty to the brink of collapse.

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