



SOLAYMĀN I

SOLAYMĀN I, SHAH (b. early 1057/February or March 1648; d. 6 Du'l-ḥejja, 1105/29 July 1694), the eighth king of the [Safavid](#) dynasty (r. 1076-1105/1666-94). Shah Solaymān was born in 1648 to a Circassian slave woman named Nekḥat or Nākeḥa Kānom, as the oldest son of Shah 'Abbās II (Chick, p. 405; Chardin, IX, pp. 408-9; Coolhaas, II, p. 342). His given name was Sām Mirzā. Until his enthronement, he grew up secluded in the royal harem, cared for by a black eunuch named Āgā Nāẓer, and known for his arrogance (Chardin, IX, pp. 409-12). His first language was and remained Turkish; it is not clear to what extent he ever mastered spoken Persian (AN, VOC 1501, Diary Van Leenen, 28 June 1691, fol. 558).

First enthronement and early reign. Shah 'Abbas II died in Mazandaran on 25 Rabi' I 1077/25 September 1666, without indicating which of his two sons should succeed him, Sām Mirzā, or the younger Ḥamza Mirzā, who was only seven years old at the time. As soon as the news of the shah's death reached [Isfahan](#), in the evening of 30 Rabi' I /30 September, the eunuchs in charge of the palace administration set out to arrange a smooth succession. Most of them initially favored Ḥamza Mirzā, preferring a pliable child to a boy about whom little was known; who, according to rumor, might not even be alive; and who might take revenge for the presumed poisoning of his father. It was ultimately Ḥamza Mirzā's tutor who stepped forward in the council to make a plea, not for his own protégé, but for Sām Mirzā as the elder and more worthy candidate for the throne (Chardin, IX, pp. 433-42; Kaempfer, pp. 49-50; Chardin is a reliable source for this, having heard the story from a friend working



inside the harem).

The nineteen-year-old Sām Mirzā was enthroned under the name Şafi II the following day, on 1 Rabi‘ II 1077/1 October 1666, at one o’clock in the afternoon in a ceremony most likely presided over by Moḥammad-Bāqer Sabzavāri, the *şayk-al-Eslām* of Isfahan (Şefatgol, p. 226; the religious scholar Mirza Rafi‘ (Richard, I, p. 225; Anzali, p. 111, gives 1 October as the date; Kātunābādi, p. 528, gives a different date, 4 Rabi‘ II 1077/4 October 1666). The new king received the severed heads of slain Uzbeks and rewarded those who had brought them with money; he also distributed money to 300 Turkish refugees who had sought exile in Persia to escape being drafted into the Ottoman army (Tavernier, p. 476). All administrative positions were reconfirmed that same day. The name “Abbās” was removed from the royal seals, and new coins were struck in Şafi II’s name. Reflecting the smoothness of the transition, the city of Isfahan remained calm; the shops stayed open, and life went on as if nothing had happened, causing foreign residents who, fearing disturbances and looting, had kept their houses locked, to emerge before the day was out (NA, VOC 1255, 30 November 1666, fol. 818; AME, 349, Du Mans to Baron, Aleppo, 9 November 1666, fol. 120-23; Chardin, IX, pp. 471-513, X, p. 85; Matthee, 2015).

Shah Şafi II’s early reign was rather inauspicious. In the spring of 1077/1667, barely six months after he had come to power, the Dutch reported that the new monarch spent most of his time enjoying himself in his harem, for which purpose he had recruited a number of Armenian women from New Julfa. Apparently eager finally to escape the confines of the palace, he also frequently went riding with his female retinue under *qoroq*, the royal outing that was announced beforehand and for which all males living in the vicinity of the route had to evacuate their homes. He is said to have engaged in sixty-two *qoroqs* in the first year and a half of his reign (Chardin, IX, p. 553). The management of state affairs, meanwhile, was left to the riflemen commander (*tofangči-āqāsi*) Budāq Solṭān, and the head of the slave soldiers (*qollar-āqāsi*) Jamšid Khan, the two most influential court officials at the time (NA, VOC 1264, 9 April 1667, fol. 665r-v.; Chardin, IX, pp. 518-19; X, p. 32). By the summer of 1078/1667, the management of the state was reportedly fully in the hands of various courtiers, who were all jockeying for advantage in the presence of a ruler whose harem upbringing had taught him little about the world (NA, VOC 1255, 6 August 1667, fols. 904-5).

An unspecified illness soon prevented the young shah from continuing his

harem pleasures. In August, Solaymān's health had deteriorated to the point where many feared that he might not survive, prompting the grandees of the court to stage a public prayer for his health while distributing 1,000 tumans to the poor (NA, VOC 1255, 23 Sept. 1667, fol. 1136; Tavernier, p. 585). As ominous was the state of the country at large at this point. A period of drought and locust swarms resulted in poor harvests in 1666 and 1667, causing the population of central Persia to suffer from high prices, famine, and disease (Chardin, IX, p. 571; X, pp. 2-4; Kaempfer, p. 59; Matthee, 1994, p. 82). The shah's generosity, meanwhile, a function of his naïve belief that the royal coffers were inexhaustible, expressed in the handing out of many fiefs, worked to the detriment of the treasury, making money, already scarce, scarcer still in Isfahan. Besides, in November 1667, natural disaster struck in the form of a powerful earthquake in Širvān, which killed more than 30,000 in the villages and some 20,000 in the capital, Šamāki, alone. Nor did the shah's health improve after he gave up wine (Chardin, X, pp. 81-85).

Second enthronement. All this suffering and misfortune was taken as a sign of divine wrath. Initially the royal physicians were faulted, but they passed the blame to the king's astrologers for having chosen an inauspicious moment for Safi's enthronement. The court, led by the shah's main physician, the queen mother, and the chief eunuchs, thus decided to arrange a second enthronement under a new name (Chick, p. 405; Chardin, X, pp. 88-93). It was suggested that Shah 'Abbās II had foretold his son's fate on his deathbed (Chardin, IX, p. 404). Some also believed that the shah's condition had worsened because the Jews of Isfahan had put a spell on him, prompting his chief minister to suggest a second inauguration (Sanson, p. 7).

The shah's second enthronement took place on *Nowruz*, 10 Šawwāl 1078/20 March 1668, at 9 a.m. in the *Čehel Sotun* palace, in a ceremony presided over by Moḥammad-Bāqer Sabzavāri, the *šayk-al-Eslām* of Isfahan (Richard, I, p. 225; Kātunābādi, p. 529). The actual ceremony was preceded by a ritual of unclear origin, as told by J.-P. Tavernier, who witnessed it. A "Zoroastrian who boasted of descent from the old kings" was put on a throne tied with his back to a wooden statue. Everyone paid him their respects until the auspicious moment for the real coronation had arrived, about one hour before sunset. At that point an official came up from behind and cut off the head of the statue, whereupon the make-believe king fled and the new shah appeared. The Safavid bonnet was next put on his head, and he was girded with a sword, and Šafi II took on the name Abu'l-Moẓaffar Abu'l-Manṣur Shah Solaymān Šafawi



Musawi Bahādor Khan, with the name Solaymān referring to the wise and judicious King Solomon. The royal seal and coin dies were changed again, and within twenty-four hours a large quantity of new money was struck. At the same time, a comet appeared in the sky, portending further calamities in the eyes of the court astrologers (Tavernier, pp. 585-86; Chardin, X, pp. 95-99; Richard, I, pp. 218, 225-26; Kaempfer, p. 61).

Character traits and reputation. We have several eyewitness descriptions of Shah Solaymān. [Jean Chardin](#), writing in the early days of his reign, described him as tall and graceful, with blue eyes and blond hair dyed black and white skin (Chardin, IX, p. 511). The pale skin is certainly visible in the various images that exist of the shah (Petrosyan et al., p. 283; Matthee, 2012, image no. 9). Chardin's compatriot Nicolas Sanson called Solaymān "tall, strong and active; a fine prince, a little too effeminate for a monarch who should be a warrior, with an aquiline nose, large blue eyes, a beard dyed black" (Sanson, p. 8). John Fryer, writing a decade into the shah's reign, concurred, calling him "tall and very fleshy" (Fryer, III, p. 51).

Immediately after the second enthronement, Solaymān retreated into the harem, enjoying its pleasures and caring but little for state affairs. He often would not appear in public for ten to twelve days, during which he was not to be approached (Tavernier, p. 586). This set the tone for a near-unanimous verdict on his character. Fryer also insisted that, over time, Solaymān had given himself over to "idleness, gluttony, lasciviousness, and abominable extortion ..." (Fryer, III, p. 51). Others speak of the shah's lack of curiosity, his "pacifist sloth and effeminacy," and his inebriated idleness (Kaempfer, pp. 66-67; De la Croix, p. 126; Chick, p. 421; AN, VOC 1323, 21 May 1678, fol. 656). In keeping with a time-honored tradition, the shah ordered a ban on drinking alcohol at the onset of his reign. Yet in due time he became a great lover of wine and women, to the point where foreign observers insisted that no Persian king had ever indulged so much in both (Bedik, pp. 232 ff.). Alcohol was outlawed at various times during his reign, but there is ample evidence that the shah himself was a heavy drinker throughout (Kaempfer, p. 281; IOR, G/36/107, 17 April 1675). As for lasciviousness, Solaymān's harem is said to have numbered 500 women (Bedik, pp. 232 ff., 250; Matthee, 2005, pp. 57-58, 90-92).

Shah Solaymān fared little better in the estimation of post-Safavid commentators. These described him as given to "lust and play," and alternatively as peace-minded, indifferent to state affairs, and cruel (Mostawfi,

p. 113; Rostam al-Ḥokamā', p. 82; Hanway, I, p. 21). In modern scholarship, Solaymān is typically treated as an ephemeral, insouciantly pacific ruler whose reign was distinctly uneventful (Malcolm, I, pp. 587-90; Roemer, p. 362). The period is also seen as the beginning of the terminal decline of the Safavid state (Matthee, 2012, introd.).

Events and developments during Solaymān's reign. It is true that Solaymān's reign was devoid of spectacular events in the form of major wars and rebellions, so much so that contemporary observers refrained from recording the period in chronicle form. The last year recounted in the *Tāriḳ-e jahānārā-ye 'abbāsi* and the *Ḳold-e barin* is 1071/1661-62. Moḥammad-Mahdi, who wrote in late 18th-century India, does not narrate events beyond that year, with the excuse that he was unable to find any more information about the period in Indian libraries (Moḥammad-Mahdi, *Tāriḳ-e Ṭahmāsiya*, fols. 128b-32, apud Röhrborn, pp. 1-2). Moḥammad-Šafi' Tehrāni, the author of the early 18th-century *Mer'āt-e wāredat*, claims that the Uzbek plundering of [Astarābād](#) was the only noteworthy event of Solaymān's reign (Tehrāni, pp. 98-99). In the absence of chronicles, often the main sources of events, historians are disproportionately dependent on foreign material for the period of Shah Solaymān.

Nor is the characterization of Solaymān as a self-indulgent ruler just an orientalist trope. It would be difficult to portray him as a paragon of courage and decisiveness. Unlike his predecessors, he never led an army campaign. Instead, he preferred to stay in his palace, often not appearing in public for months on end. He only seems to have traveled beyond Isfahan once, leaving for Qazvin in Du'l-ḥejja 1084/March 1674, spending time in the Caspian provinces, including Ašraf (see [Behšahr](#)) in Māzandarān, and returning to the capital in Jomādā I 1087/July 1676 (Zak'aria of Agulis, pp. 125-26; *Ḳātunābādi*, p. 532).

But the idea that under Solaymān nothing of note happened in Persia is as devoid of sense as the notion that he had no role in governance. Herbert Busse (pp. 75-76) argues that Solaymān exerted greater control than is generally assumed. Judasz Krusinski indeed claims that, despite his lack of experience, he chose a "minister of sufficient abilities" to address the food crisis that erupted soon after he had come to power (Krusinski, I, p. 133). Similarly, in 1080/1691 the shah ordered the new grand vizier, Moḥammad-Ṭāher Waḥid Qazvini, to make sure that soldiers were paid, to engage in currency reform, to fill vacant positions, and to revive commerce (Kroell, pp.



30-31). Even the notion that Solaymān did not engage in any military action has to be nuanced. It is true that he scrupulously abided by the terms of the Peace of Zohab, which his grandfather, Shah Ṣafi, had concluded with the Ottomans in 1048/1639. It is not easy to evaluate the claim that he had a burning desire to go to war against the Ottomans (Bedik, p. 232). But even if Solaymān himself never commanded his troops, the Safavid army did engage in battle in this period, albeit not against the Ottomans. In 1081-82/1671-72, the Persians mounted an expedition against the Kitch in Makran (*Taḍkera-ye Ṣafawiya*, pp. 383-86, 402, 406, 410 ff.; IOR, G/36/106, 13 November 1671, fol. 51; *ibid.*, 2nd fasc., 19 April 1673, fol. 103). Four years later, the shah sent an army led by Kalb-ʿAli Khan Ṣāmlu to fight the Turkmen who had attacked Astarābād and who were making the region around **Dāmḡān** and Semnan unsafe (Chardin, X, p. 68); and in 1102/1691 a campaign was undertaken against the Uzbeks (Witsen, pp. 430-31),

A shrinking revenue base accounts in part for this relative lack of military activity. Alarmed by the ballooning deficit, Solaymān’s mother is said to have ended the shah’s profligacy by imposing financial discipline on him following his second enthronement. For the remainder of his reign, the shah, encouraged by his budget-conscious grand vizier, Shaikh ʿAli Khan, became known for his parsimoniousness. He is thus said to have taken over only 700 of the 2,000 troops of the *qorčis*, the praetorian guard who had served his father (Kaempfer, pp. 65-66, 106-7). Throughout his reign, various administrative positions were left unfilled, at times for considerable periods of time. In 1680 the Shah assumed the function of *ṣadr-e kāṣṣa*, the highest religious state official, himself (Kaempfer, pp. 98, 104; Kroell, p. 46). Two years later the position of *sepahsālār* remained open after the death of the incumbent, presumably because of the official’s high salary. In addition, the positions of *divānbeḡi*, *qollar-āqāsi* (head of the slave soldiers), *ṣayk-al-Eslām* (chief religious authority), and *miršekār-bāši* (master of hunt) were all vacant in this year (NA, VOC 1364, 14 June 1682; 25 November 1682, fol. 2734v). In 1095/1684 the post of *išiq-āqāsi* (a court official) was unoccupied (Kaempfer, pp. 106-7). At an unspecified date the position of supervisor, *motawalli*, of the shrine of Mashhad remained open (Kātunābādi, pp. 522-23). Most consequentially, following the death of his long-serving chief minister, Shaikh ʿAli Khan, in the autumn of 1100/1689, no new grand vizier was appointed for two years.

This parsimony did not prevent the shah from engaging in building activities,

albeit on a lesser scale than his predecessors. The most illustrious building erected under his auspices is the [Hašt Behešt](#), built in 1080/1670 (Honarfar, pp. 622-26; Babaie, pp. 198-206). He also constructed at least one [caravanserai](#), that of Mahyār in Šahrežā (Valentijn, V, p. 260). Other buildings going up during his reign include Masjed-e Kālwatnešin, Madrasa-ye Kāsgarān, and the Boq'a-ye Āqā Ḥosayn K̄ānsāri in Isfahan (Kātunābādi, p. 536; Honarfar, p. 652; Gaube and Wirth, pp. 242-43; Landau, pp. 260-61; Hillenband, pp. 804-8). Shah Solaymān also established a number of, pious endowments (*awqāf*; *Torbat-e pākān*, I, pp. 159-64). He also paid for the annual upkeep and restoration of the citadel of Astarābād (*Az Āstārā* VI, pp. 45-46). In 1086/1676, finally, he had the shrine of Imam Režā in Mashhad restored after it was destroyed in an earthquake (Nava'i, p. 232; Losensky, 205-6).

Another reason for the lack of martial display is that, with the exception of Uzbek raiding into Khorasan, which continued throughout the time he was in power, and Cossack incursions into the [Caspian Sea](#) littoral (Burton, pp. 343-44; Kroell, pp. 48-49), the first twenty-five years of Solaymān's reign were marked by peace on Persia's borders. Domestically, matters visibly deteriorated, however, with frequent reports about famine, food riots, and popular rebellions (NA, VOC 1324, 21 May 1678, fol. 656).

Royal insouciance, as well as growing insolvency, also contributed to the deterioration of conditions for Persia's non-Shi'i inhabitants. Pressure on Armenians, mostly in the form of the enforcement of the [poll tax](#), noticeably increased during Solaymān's reign. Various instances of Armenians converting to Islam in the same period reflect heightened religious fervor (Ghougassian, pp. 158-59; Abgar Armani). Solaymān seems to have been more religiously minded than his immediate predecessors. According to E. Kaempfer (p. 58), he never skipped a prayer. He is also said not to have shown the "same interest in Christians as his father" (Bedik, p. 232). And the high clergy in his reign managed to gain in visibility and influence, as is shown in the prominent role played by the various *šayk-al-Eslāms* in the country (Šefatgol, pp. 452-53). The shah nevertheless continued the tradition of showing benevolence, especially to the Armenians of his realm. Various *raqams* granting privileges, affirming rights, and prohibiting Muslim vexations of Christians testify to this attitude (Kat'oghikos Simēon of Erevan, pp. 330 ff.). If anything, the oppression of the New Julfans appears to have been less a function of the shah's bigotry than of his lack of visibility (Sanson, pp. 10-12).



Solaymān was generally known to be mild-mannered, yet he occasionally had outbursts of rage, and instances of cruelty are recorded as well, especially at times when he was drunk. The shah had an especially complicated relationship with his long-serving grand vizier, Shaikh ‘Ali Khan. Dependent on his competence, the shah left Shaikh ‘Ali Khan in charge of state affairs. Solaymān seems to have admired his grand vizier’s probity and abstemiousness as much he resented it, judging by various occasions when he humiliated him by forcing him to drink or cutting off his beard, after which he would show great remorse (Chardin, VIII, pp. 454-59; IX, p. 330; Malcolm, I, pp. 589-90; Matthee, 1994).

Other instances of cruelty occurred in 1091/1680, when he had the eyes of the *divānbeḡi*, Zaynal Beg Khan, gouged out and the E‘temād-al-Dawla Shaikh ‘Ali Khan, as well as the *nāẓer*, bastinadoed (*Tadkera-ye Šafawiya*, p. 472; AN, VOC 1343, 13 April 1680; IOR, G/36/108, 23 Feb. 1680). A year later, he ordered the execution of the *qorčī-bāši* (head of the tribal guards) Sāru Khan Sahandlu, having his head brought to him on a tray (Sanson, apud Kroell, pp. 35-42). Solaymān is also said to have killed his own son, a lad of only twelve or fourteen who had spent his entire life in the harem wearing women’s clothes, at the instigation of astrologers who had presaged that he would depose him (Valentijn, V, p. 255). This story is not corroborated by any other sources. Neither is the story, told in the Armenian sources, that the shah had his own mother and sister murdered (Zak‘aria of K‘anak‘er, pp. 197-98; Brosset, 1874-76, II, p. 112). Jan Struys even claims to have visited the mother’s grave in a village south of Isfahan in 1672 (Struys, p. 346; new ed., p. 345). In fact, we know that Solaymān’s mother set up a pious endowment (*waqf*) as late as 1105/1694, which indicates that she outlived her son (*Torbat-e pākān*, p. 170).

The shah’s erratic and unpredictable behavior created an atmosphere in which courtiers refrained from speaking their mind; they just flattered the shah and hid unpleasant news from him, contributing to the malaise in the country (Chardin, IX, pp. 243, 250). Even Shaikh ‘Ali Khan, his longstanding grand vizier and main advisor, decided to keep a low profile following an incident that almost cost him his life (Matthee, 1994, p. 84).

Rarely inviting (foreign) guests to drinking parties and mostly going out under *qoroq* (see above), Shah Solaymān was far less accessible than his predecessors had been (Ange de St Joseph, p. 88). In 1094/1683 the option to approach the shah directly during his outings was abolished (AN, VOC 1373, 29 May 1683, fol. 862v). For direct information, the shah seems to have relied on



the advice of a limited number of people. Chief among these were Budāq Solṭān, the head of the musketeers (*tofangčī-āqāsi*), Jamshid Khan, the *mehtar*, *chamberlain*, and his own mother (Chardin, IX, p. 545). Palace eunuchs, whose total number is said to have reached 3,000 during his reign, and more particularly Āgā Kāfur (chief eunuch), Āgā Mobārak, and Āgā Kamāl came to play a dominant role in state affairs (Chardin, VI, pp. 24, 40-42; IX, p. 330; Kaempfer, p. 107; Sanson, p. 105). Whereas his father, Shah ‘Abbās II, used to receive his grand vizier every day, Solaymān often sent out one or more eunuchs to the reception room where the grand vizier would wait (Kaempfer, p. 63). At an unspecified date, the shah created a secret council composed of palace eunuchs, reducing the *divan* and the regular consultative assembly to mere executors of decisions made within the ranks of the harem (Kaempfer, p. 234; Sanson, p. 145). In the last six months of his reign, the insularity of the palace had reached a point where the grand vizier had to submit anything important in a sealed envelope to the harem, after which he had to wait until a decision was made (NA, VOC 1571, 23 July 1694, fol. 57).

Diplomatic activity, already much reduced from the days of Shah ‘Abbās I, also dwindled under Solaymān. He offered exile to Sultan Jalal-al-Din Akbar, the rebellious son of the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb (Kašani). Envoys from adjacent Muslim states, Mughal India, the Ottoman Empire and the Uzbek state visited Isfahan during his reign (Navā’i, pp. 232-33). Yet this elicited little reciprocal action. Thus official Safavid missions to the Ottoman capital appear limited to the one led by Kalb-‘Ali Khān Ziād Oġlu Qājār, who in 1101/1690 went to Istanbul to congratulate Sultan Süleyman II with his accession three years earlier, in response to an Ottoman mission that had visited Isfahan in 1099/1688 (Güngörürler, pp. 250, 261-63). In 1669 and 1682 envoys representing King Narai of the Siamese (Thai) Kingdom of Ayutthaya visited Isfahan. The latter mission apparently came with a (puzzling) request for Safavid naval assistance against the Burmese kingdom of Pegu. The mission that was dispatched to Siam in response in 1096/1685 was immortalized in the well-known *Safīna-ye solaymāni*, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, the account of the journey composed by the mission’s secretary, Moḥammad Rabi’ (Moḥammad Rabi’; Marcinkowski, 2002; idem, 2012). Scrupulously abiding by the terms of the Peace of Zohab that Shah Safi I had concluded with the Ottomans in 1049/1639, Solaymān is not known to have engaged in an active foreign policy with the nations of Europe. In 1079/1668-69, he sent a letter via the English East India Company asking King Charles III of England for skilled craftsmen (Fekete, pp. 529-33). But Russian emissaries who came to Isfahan in the 1670s,



keen to seek anti-Ottoman cooperation, were all rebuffed with the argument that Persia was not willing to jeopardize its peaceful relations with its western neighbor (Matthee, 2013, pp. 354-55). The various European envoys who visited in 1095-96/1684-85, a time of renewed Ottoman aggression culminating in their failed siege of Vienna, received the same response. No reciprocal missions to Europe have been recorded in this period (Matthee, 1998, pp. 154-62; Burton, p. 343).

Paradoxically, given the low-level interaction with the outside world, the influence of European artistic styles and motifs on the visual arts of Persia culminated in this period. It is precisely during the reign of Shah Solaymān that the so-called *farangi-sāzi*, the “Europeanized” syncretic mode of painting with its use of chiaroscuro and (awkward) perspective; its allegorical, often biblical, imagery; and its particular interest in European figures, especially women, reached its full development (Babaie, 2009; Habibi, 2016; idem, 2017; Landau, 2007; idem, 2011; and idem, 2013).

Later years. In his later years, heavy drinking taking its toll, Solaymān became more and more reclusive and infirm. The first outward signs of the shah’s indisposition became manifest in 1102/1691 (AN, VOC 1501, 21 March 1691, fols. 508-9). In the summer of that year, his astrologers told him that, due to the risk of disaster striking, he should not leave his palace for the next nine months (Valentijn, V, p. 255).

This same period saw various forms of unrest that in time would grow in intensity. In the late 1680s, an uprising is recorded in [Georgia](#). In 1101/1689, the Uzbeks conducted raids deep into Khorasan, defying the Safavid forces that were sent against them. In the same year, [Baluchi](#) tribesmen engaged in raids in the southeast, and the first Afghan incursions from the east are recorded in this period as well (*Taḍkera-ye Šafawiya*, pp. 541 ff., 546 ff., 582-83, 592; Witsen, pp. 430-31, 537; Brosset 1856-57, II/1, p. 569). In 1103/1692, the Kurdish rebel Solaymān Bābā took up arms against the Safavids, defeating the Persian forces sent against him. In the following year rebellions are recorded in the [Kerman](#) and Qandahar region, in Lār, and in Georgia. At one point, Baluchi tribesmen engaged in depredations at a distance of one day’s travel from Isfahan, while the Uzbek staged incursions into Khorasan (NA, VOC 1507; Kroell, pp. 65-66, 72).

Solaymān had been ill for a long time before he passed away. In 1103/August 1692 he was said not to have left his palace for more than

eighteen months, owing to a warning by his astrologers that the alignment of the stars was unfavorable (Gauderau, 10 August 1692, in AME 353, fols. 186-93). Physical infirmity seems to have played a role in this. A non-contemporary source insists that, for the last seven years of his life, Solaymān suffered from foot pain and was bedridden (Babikhanov, p. 111). Krusinski claims that the shah suffered from “a very painful gout, which confined him to his bed two whole years” (Krusinski, I, p. 81). Yet Ṭehrāni and Mostawfi, followed by Malcolm and Lockhart, were wrong to state that he did not appear in public for a full seven years (Ṭehrāni, p. 97; Mostawfi, p. 113; Malcolm, I, p. 397; Lockhart, p. 31, n. 1). In truth, Solaymān did not leave his harem for a full four years before his death (Gauderau, apud Kroell, p. 64). This invisibility allowed factionalized rivalries among courtiers and administrators to get out of hand. A good example is the long-standing quarrel between the Gregorian Armenians and Isfahan’s resident Catholics, local Armenians as well as missionaries. The Gregorians, relying for support on their patron, the queen mother, clearly took advantage of the shah’s absence to put pressure on the coreligionists, the Catholic Armenians; they also managed to convince the authorities to force the missionaries out of New Julfa (Kroell, p. 78; Chick, pp. 461-69).

Death and funeral: Solaymān did not appear in public, at the hall (*tālār*) of the ‘Āli Qāpu, for the Nowruz festivities on 23 Rajab 1105/20 March 1694, and even declined to accept the customary gifts from governors and other dignitaries. The last time he was seen was on 24 March, when he presided over a very brief meeting (*majles*), not long enough to accept all the gifts, after which he returned to his harem. He did not leave the interior of the palace again until his death on 6 Dū’l-ḥejja 1105/29 July 1694 (NA, VOC 1559, 8 July 1694, fols. 854v-55; NA, VOC 1571, 23 July 1694, fol. 57).

From Saturday, 24 July, onward, the shah’s condition, already poor as a result of chronic alcoholism, turned critical (NA, VOC 1523, 29 July 1694, fol. 693). Francesco Gemelli-Careri (II, p. 121) claims that the shah had fallen ill on Wednesday, 21 July, adding that, at this point, the palace drums and trumpets fell silent (also see Gaudereau, in Kroell, p. 67). On 22 July, as unrest caused by Baluchi incursions in the vicinity of the city created turmoil in Isfahan, a sum of 37,000 tumans was distributed to the poor, and orders were sent out to provincial governors to release all prisoners. On July 27, the news spread that the shah was in the throes of death (Gaudereau, in Kroell, p. 65; Gemelli-Careri, II, p. 121). The following day all prisoners in Isfahan were released so



they could pray for the shah's health. The main courtiers also sent money to the clerics for the same purpose. Around noon on Thursday, 6 Du'l-ḥejja/29 July, the gates of the palace were shut, with the main courtiers standing watch. At around one o'clock in the afternoon that same day, the shah passed away. His last words had apparently been "Give me some wine" (Gaudereau, in Kroell, p. 64, who erroneously states that the shah died on 28 July). The assertion, made by Mostawfi (p. 113), that it took the courtiers three days before they dared to check if the shah was dead or just in a coma, is not borne out by other sources.

Following the shah's demise, Āgā Kamāl, the main eunuch, immediately summoned all high officials to inform them about the news and to make sure the city would stay calm as preparations in the harem were made for the succession. All officials at that point tore up their habits as a sign of grief, and left the palace with their turbans half-unwound. As the news spread around the city, the drums and trumpets, which ordinarily sounded in the palace twice a day, fell silent, not to be used again until the enthronement of a successor. All shops and houses closed for fear of unrest, and no one was seen outside (NA, VOC 1523, 29 July 1694, fol. 693). The shah's corpse was deposited in a part of the harem named *bāg-e bolbol*, where it was embalmed (Gaudereau, in Kroell, p. 64).

On Sunday, 9 Du'l-ḥejja 1105/1 August 1694, at dawn, the wagon carrying the corpse, covered with heavy gold-threaded cloth, left the palace and the city for a mosque located about an hour outside of Isfahan, to be taken to [Qom](#), where, like most of his forebears, the shah was to be interred. A great throng of people moved with the stately procession, accompanying the bier all the way to the mosque, all of them on foot except for the grand vizier and the *šayḵ-al-Eslām*, who rode on horseback because of their advanced age. The suite included a large number of clerics, who cried and wailed continuously in mourning, as well as soldiers. Many courtiers tore up their habits as a sign of mourning and sorrow. The eunuchs next brought the oldest son out of the harem, after which he was put on the throne between 6 and 7 in the evening (Fendereski, pp. 70-71; NA, VOC 1571, 23 July 1694, fol. 57; NA, VOC 1523, 7 August 1694, fol. 694r.; NA, VOC 1549, 15 August 1694, fol. 598r). Shah [Solṭān Ḥosayn](#) was officially enthroned on Saturday, 15 Du'l-ḥejja 1105/7 August 1694 (Lockhart, p. 36, gives August 6 as the date, though he adds in n. 4 that some sources indicate the next day).

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