

## REIGN OF SHAH SAFI<sup>1</sup> (1629-1642)

FR. DIMAS of the Cross, then Vicar Provincial, began his letter of 18.9.1629<sup>2</sup> to the Praepositus General in Rome:

“For the present the following brief account of the death of the king, and how his grand-son, formerly called Sām Mirza, son of Safi Mirza, was raised to the throne, will suffice  
“Your Reverence:<sup>3</sup>

“ . . . At this time 'Ali Baig, a leading personage and royal official, who was at Farrahabad along with the dead king, was not in Isfahan, but awaited there: and for that reason the coronation and proclamation of the new king was delayed for fifteen days.

“On Monday, the 5th February, in the morning Sām Mirza was proclaimed, crowned and acknowledged with great and universal delight as king, and by command of Shah 'Abbas the name of his father, Safi, was given him, and he is called Shah Safi.

“The method observed in paying him homage and fealty and recognizing him as king was thus: During many days the king mounted a platform (plinth) at the gate of the palace, and the most distinguished persons went to kiss his feet: when one of them knelt down, the person concerned was held by Khusru Mirza and by — Baig, a leading personage and esteemed by the late Shah, after this fashion—the one took hold of the individual by the arm, the other by the other arm, and he was not released until he had withdrawn some little way. I omit much of the festivities they made of it in the Maidan, especially a *Chiraghani*—an illumination<sup>4</sup> by candles, which lasted for three nights and which, they say, cost 3,000 Tumans, which were paid by the Banians<sup>5</sup> and other traders of the city.

“In recognition of the precautions they had adopted, and the maintenance of public order and peace during the interval, when he had not yet been proclaimed, the new king gave, besides other rewards, to them both the title of 'Khan', i.e. 'duke', changing also the name of Khusru Mirza<sup>6</sup> and causing him to be called 'Rustam Khan'.

“In the province of Gilan, when the news of the death of Shah 'Abbas became known, a man called Gharib Shah” (i.e. the 'stranger' or 'foreigner' king) “rebelled and declared himself king; but, after they had fought with him and killed some 2,000 of his men, he was taken prisoner by the Persians, and together with the heads of many persons and a number of his relatives he was taken to Isfahan and put to death: and the heads were cut off and stuck up throughout the city of Isfahan, in order to intimidate the people.

“From all parts of the provinces of Persia there has come, and is still coming, a continuous stream of khans, sultans, baigs and other leading persons to pay homage to the new king and bring him presents and gifts, according to the position of the donors.

“On the fourth day after the new king had been proclaimed, we too paid our respects and presented him with the letter from His Holiness, the Psalms of David in Arabic and other unique things, together with some water-melons, and we kissed his robes and afterwards gave him an account of the Sovereign Pontiff and of the friendship he had always

<sup>1</sup> The name of this sovereign is indiscriminately spelt *Sufi* and *Safi* by European writers, and particularly European Religious contemporaries resident at his Court and hearing his name constantly pronounced (and there is normally a wide difference between those two 'vowel' sounds), so that it is not easy to know which best to follow here. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th, 10th editions, for instance, in the historical survey uses *Sufi*, the 14th edition with the survey compiled by a new hand, uses *Safi*. The fact remains that his coins in Persian script indicate *Safi*, as they are transliterated by the British Museum Catalogue. <sup>2</sup> O.C.D. 237 b.

<sup>3</sup> The portion relating to the death of 'Abbas I and the precautions taken in Isfahan has been already quoted and is here omitted.

<sup>4</sup> The Persian word for 'lighting by lamps', but fireworks may also be included in the meaning.

<sup>5</sup> A term used in India for Hindu moneylenders, traders, etc.: there were a number settled in Isfahan at this period.

<sup>6</sup> 'Mirza' after the name in modern Persia has been used to designate a prince of the royal blood.