

Isma'il Mirza, and Isma'il in turn some months later killed by his barber).<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, there appears to be some ground for concluding that after the death of Shah Muhammad, the father, the throne did not come at once to 'Abbas, but that for months, or a year or more, his elder brother Hamzeh Mirza was in possession of the chief power, 'Abbas himself not in close brotherly support, but an outcast or fugitive in a distant province, a puppet in the hands of tribal chieftains and an ambitious rival, if not a fratricide: and, to judge by his subsequent treatment of his own sons, that would not have been a crime from which he would shrink.

It remains here to add a small contribution by European residents at the Persian Court intimate with the Safawi family to whatever Persian historical research may be inclined to accept as the date of birth of 'Abbas I and, therefore, his age when the disappearance of Hamzeh Mirza left him as second-born the heir to Shah Muhammad Khudabandeh. Recapitulating from the account of Vincenzo degl'Alessandri already quoted, which is dated 1574, regarding the family of Shah Tahmasp I:

“The eldest is named Khudabandeh Mirza, aged about 43 years . . . he has *three* sons, the eldest at the Court and *aged 14 years* of most handsome looks, and high spirit, “dearly loved by the king . . . except for these he (the king) has no other grandsons by “his sons. . . .”

Hamzeh Mirza would have thus been born in or about 1560-1, according as solar or lunar years are meant, and the month of writing of the report: he would have been some 18 years old when dispatched with troops to recover Shirwan: and some 25 years old, if assassinated after Shah Muhammad's death (which was in 1585 according to Krusinski). 'Abbas Mirza presumably was several years younger: had he been in his teens and nearer in age Alessandri, who has a word about most of the young princes, would have mentioned it.

Fr. John Thaddeus, who knew 'Abbas I intimately for twenty years, in the report in the archives of Propaganda Fide, Rome,<sup>2</sup> is quite precise: “The king of Persia is 63 lunar years of age, but 60 in solar years”, and the secretary of the Congregation submitting the report adds:

“This is what can be said about the king of Persia and his realm, which king, after the “departure of the aforesaid Fr. John Thaddeus (1628) is understood to have died in January 1629, aged 63.”

Assuming solar years are meant, this would make the birth of 'Abbas Mirza to have been in 1566, and his age as 20 shortly after the death of Muhammad Khudabandeh: whereas, the original report having been written at Isfahan in 1624 when the Shah was 60 solar years of age, that would make him 64 to 65 years old at his death in January 1629. In any case the writer of the article on the history of Persia in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 10th edition—“at the age of 70, after a reign of 42 years . . . 'Abbas died on the night of 27.1.1628”—was widely beside the mark in the first figure, as that computation would have made 'Abbas born in 1558, and some years older than Hamzeh Mirza!

Once put forward as sovereign 'Abbas I returned to Khurasan with the object of chastising the Uzbek tribesmen who after his departure had made a raid, and seized Harat, where 'Abbas himself had perhaps passed his early years. Arrived at Mashhad he was obliged by news of internal disturbances to go back to Qazwin; and of that return the Uzbek chieftain took advantage to occupy the sacred city of Mashhad itself, and let it be plundered by his tribesmen. Then the young ruler had to hasten south to Shiraz to quell an outbreak in Fars: and that was followed by the menace of a Turkish attack from Mesopotamia into western

<sup>1</sup> Yet another account (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 10th ed., under heading “Shah 'Abbas”) gives this version: “Abbas was the *youngest* son of Shah Muhammad Khudabandeh. After heading a successful rebellion against his father and causing one of his brothers (or, as some say, both) to be assassinated, he obtained possession of the throne in 1585. . . . He first attacked the Uzbaks and defeated them near Herat in 1597.”

<sup>2</sup> S.R., vol. 209, p. 240 *et seq.*