

earliest was dated 1631,<sup>1</sup> when Shah Safi granted them leave to bring their own goods ashore at Gāمبرun. (It was not till 1706 that 12 jaribs of land were bought for the construction of a Residency.)

By October 1634 the young Shah had "been far away from Isfahan for the past two years" already, a letter of 30.10.1634 discloses:<sup>2</sup> and it is evident from a letter of the Vicar Provincial to Pietro della Valle in Rome<sup>3</sup> that the revolt of Taimuraz Khan of Georgia was in part the cause:

" . . . News from Georgia you will have from the Theatine Fathers, i.e. how Taimuraz Khan fled . . . and how this king" (i.e. Shah Safi) "entered Georgia. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Shah Safi has been painted in black colours by some writers—in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, tenth edition, and subsequently, for instance—and with scathing denunciations:

" . . . His reign was a succession of barbarities, which can only be attributed to an evil disposition acted upon by an education not only wanting the *ingenuae artes*, but void of all civilizing elements and influences. Taught to read and write, his diversions were to shoot with the bow and ride upon an ass. There was a rumour, moreover, that his *father* to stunt the possible growth of wit ordered him a daily supply of opium. When left to his own devices he became a drunkard and a murderer, and is accused of the death of his mother, sister, and favourite queen. . . ."

Though some of it is taken from Fr. du Cerceau's 'History' and prologue to his edition of Fr. Krusinski's Memoirs (1740), that sort of denunciation betrays its own uncritical basis. Sam Mirza was three years old when his *father*, Safi Mirza, was put to death: that a daily supply of opium was given to the infant before that age does not read convincingly. Just after the enlightenment of 'Abbas I had been extolled in the work cited, it was surely contradictory to represent the education of his heir as void of all civilizing influences. But the charge loses its sense of proportion when the records of the other Safawi monarchs and from Nadir Shah to Aqa Muhammad Shah, for instance, are investigated: by comparison 'Abbas I was more cruel in his methods of putting people to death. As to the assertion, reproduced in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, that Shah Safi killed his mother, surely the accusation is laid at the wrong door! For this is what the Agents of the East India Company at Gāمبرun<sup>5</sup> reported, 19.10.1648, over six years *after* the death of Shah Safi:

"The 11th instant we had news in this place that the king" (i.e. Shah 'Abbas II) "being weary of his grandmother's accustomed presumption over him, not considering that he was now grown to more maturity, to be freed thereof comands that she . . . should be poisoned, which was accordingly put into execution. . . ."

That the young Shah took to drinking was another matter, of which anon. The Carmelite missionaries, his contemporaries, repeatedly praise his affability, and consideration for them: throughout his reign there was no charge of persecution of Christians raised against him, as so constantly there had been against 'Abbas I. As to Tavernier's allusion to the execution of a European, this was admittedly the legal punishment of a homicide. There is no mention in the case of Shah Safi of the moral turpitude, the tyranny of his grandfather.

"From what I understand about this new Shah of Persia, he gives considerably greater

<sup>1</sup> *English Factory Records, 1726-27*, India Office.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Dimas, O.C.D. 237 b.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Dimas, *S.R.*, vol. 104 (V), 'Lettere di Spagna'.

<sup>4</sup> "Taimuraz I, prince of Kakhetia, the eastern third of the disintegrated kingdom of Georgia, having refused to surrender Daud Khan, brother of the dead Imam Quli Khan and his own brother-in-law, fled to Imeritia, the western third of the former kingdom. . . ." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

<sup>5</sup> See Sir W. Foster's *English Factories in India*, 4 vols., 1634-56.