

“in the second half of the 17th century it was the second city in Persia with 550,000 inhabitants, 15,000 houses, 300 caravansarais, 200 mosques.”¹

Like his great-grandfather and namesake, 'Abbas II appreciated European painting, and perhaps tried his hand at the art:

“It would be a good move to send out a Religious who can paint, because the Shah of Persia is very fond of painting and likes to paint himself. . . .”²

Again, from another Carmelite, 21.6.1655:³

“Nothing could be more useful to the Mission than if we had here a good painter, the Shah taking great pleasure in painting: and in these countries good artists are rare. There is a Dutchman who works for the Company, who has done very little, and yet he has received very good rewards, and the Shah has conferred great favours on him. . . .”

And Fr. Vincent Mary of S. Catharine of Siena, returning from India, 10.9.1656,⁴ wrote:

“The Fathers in Persia wanted to have Lay Brother Louis (of S. Francis) for their service, so that with his painting he might bring them into the good graces of, and favour with the Shah, who is mad (*impazzito*) on that art. . . .”

'Abbas II died at Damghan in north Persia, 25.9.1666,⁵ and was buried at Qum, where his father lies—not yet 33 years of age, therefore, by solar reckoning, having reigned 24 years and a few months.⁶ It is noteworthy that his life-span should have been—within a few months—almost identical in length with that of his father. With all his tenacity in the years of the operations round Kandahar and his interest in painting, already, 20.8.1660,⁷ it was being said about him that:

“the king is so much intent on sensuality that he does not think anything about his kingdom. . . .”

Unless there be a confusion with his remarks on the death of Shah Safi, the compiler of MSS. *Hist. Miss.*⁸ appears to imply that ‘an inflammation of the throat coming from excessive ‘drinking’ was the proximate cause of 'Abbas II's death: “for the rest,” the MSS. adds, after touching on his vices, “he was a just, liberal and magnanimous monarch, lover of the Franks, “who let the missionaries alone”—which overlooks (not alone among European writings on the period, and not unnaturally in a compiler who had never been in Persia, and wrote seventy years after the event) that these tributes are gainsaid and contradicted by the religious oppression of subject-peoples in this reign.

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¹ Chardin, vol. I, 133–84. Jean Chardin, born 16.11.1643, started on his first journey 1664, arrived in Persia 1665, returned to Paris 1670: left Paris for a second journey 11.8.1671, remained at Isfahan from 24.6.1673 to 2.2.1674: he was again at Isfahan, 2.7.1674 to 18.5.1675, and left the country via Bandar 'Abbas, 22.10.1676.

² Fr. Felix of S. Antony, O.C.D. 241 k.

³ Fr. Casimir Joseph.

⁴ O.C.D. 242 a.

⁵ See Père Raphael's *Récit du Royaume de Perse* in the Archives Nationales of Paris. Claude Barbin in his book of 1671, p. 141, *Le couronnement de Soleiman III*, wrote: “As the result of a debauch he fell ill at Khur [*sic*] while returning from Qazwin, and died four days later. . . .”

⁶ Not died in 1668, at the age of 38, after a reign of 27 years, as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edition, was so inexact in stating.

⁷ Fr. Francis of the Passion, Shiraz, *S.R.*, vol. 238, p. 62.

⁸ Chap. 26, book 9.