

REIGN OF SHAH SULAIMAN (1666–1694)

IT WAS, no doubt, of Safi Mirza, whose regal name, after he was raised to the throne, became Sulaiman, that the Factors of the East India Company at Gāmbnun noted in their diary on 8.5.1648

“the king is made father of a young son”

Claude Barbin in his book of 1671, *Le Couronnement de Soleiman III*, stated:

“Soleiman nasquit l’an de l’Egire 1057, son père étant alors âgé de 18 ans, d’une esclave “Circassienne ou Cherkas” (Niqaat Khanum by name).

The year 1057 A.H. began 6.2.1647 and ended 26.1.1648. Bearing in mind the date of the reception of the news at Gāmbnun one may reckon therefore that the new sovereign was born in January 1648, if not at the end of 1647: clearly he was over 18½ years of age by the Christian calendar at the time of his accession, as ‘Abbas II died 26 Rabi’ II, 1077 A.H. = 25.9.1666.

The MSS. *Hist. Miss.* relates:¹

“Shortly after his accession he fell ill. First of all the people, nobles and governors were “bled’ for money, which was passed in a barrel for eight nights over the head of the king “with the words: ‘This money is sacrificed for the good health of our lord the king.’ Even “the Armenians had to pay 50 Tumans. This perquisition was made twice, the second time “in August. But, as the king did not recover good health (in fact, it was never perfect), “the doctors were blamed: they in their turn blamed the astrologers for having made a “mistake in casting the horoscope from the time the Shah ascended the throne. So they “thought to correct this by a piece of buffoonery. Having discovered, to their notion, an “unlucky day to be followed by a lucky one, they placed a Gabr,² who boasted of being “descended from Rustam, on the throne, clad in royal robes with, behind him, a statue in “wood resembling him. The nobles came to do homage to him as long as the hour was “unlucky, but, when it became lucky, the Gabr fled and one of them cut off the wooden head “with a sword. Then in ordinary clothing appeared the king who, sitting on the throne, “was robed and placed there with the name of Sulaiman. . . .”

As to his appearance, more than twenty years later Père Sanson, the secular chaplain of Mgr Pidou from the Seminary for Foreign Missions at Paris, who after a few years only spent in Iran left on 30.10.1692 to return to France and subsequently published in Paris, 1694, *L’état présent du Royaume de Perse*, is the authority for the following:³

“. . . He was tall, strong and active—a fine prince, a little too effeminate for a monarch “—with a Roman nose, very well proportioned to other parts, very large blue eyes and a “middling mouth, a beard dyed black, shaved round and well turned back, even to his “ears. His manner was affable but nevertheless majestic. He had a masculine and agree- “able voice, a gentle way of speaking and was so very engaging that, when you had bowed “to him, he seemed in some measure to return it by a courteous inclination of his head, and “this he always did smiling. . . .”

¹ Chap. 26, book 9, O.C.D. 284.

² The vulgar Persian name for “Zoroastrian”, i.e. one professing the old pre-Muhammadan religion.

³ Quoted by (a) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and (b) *Études Carmelitaines Historiques et Critiques*, 1926.