

Narrative C has a version of the immediate reasons for the conspiracy to kill Shah Isma'il II completely at variance with the above:

“So, being desirous of having himself crowned in the city of Baghdad, on the tomb of Husain, his ‘cousin’ the prophet, but, unable to go there without an army, because it is a land held by the Turks and very well guarded, he distributed horses and money to his people, so that they should set themselves in array to proceed, arms in hand, for his crowning and the girding on of the sword, as is their practice. For their kings never wear girded on the sword unless they have first been crowned. Because he knew that all the councillors and other enemies of his father were also very great enemies of his own, he planned to put them to death—as he did: and he chose others for his councillors, who urged him to send ambassadors to the Turks and confirm the terms of peace which had reigned between their fathers. But he (Isma'il) would not agree to such counsel, because in his heart he was a pronounced enemy of the Turkish Sultan; and he made the excuse that the Turkish Sultan had not deigned to send ambassadors to congratulate him on his being set at liberty and his accession to the throne. Seeing that he was obstinate and determined in his intentions, despite the great persuasion they had used in pointing out to him many risks and losses which might occur in his realm, whenever he should go to war. Nevertheless, more obstinate than ever, he began to put himself in a position to wage war: and they determined to put him to death in some way or other. They adopted the expedient of poisoning him, and did so by suborning a sweetheart of his, wife of one of his father's councillors, whom he had killed: and they caused her to give him, as they were wont, some opium which was poisoned, and deprived him of life in the month of October of the same year¹ in which he was set free from his prison.”

B

“The facts were kept secret by the prudent lady, and, in order to obviate any great disturbance, she summoned the chief ‘captains’, accomplices of hers in the king's death, who were Hamid [*? sic*] Khan, Khalid [*? sic*] Khan, Aqa Wali Sultan,² . . . Ahmad Sultan, and two others, captains and one of them captain of the guard: and she harangued them, saying that in their hands lay that rich empire; if they desired to ruin it by pursuing private animosities they were doing very wrong. But it was now time for them to lay aside any ill-intention they might have one against the other, and not give delight to the Turks and Tatars, who lived on the frontiers of the empire and who desired no better opportunity to subjugate them and divide up the kingdom, adding that all she said to them was for their benefit and that of their successors not for herself . . .: and in order that such great efforts by her grandfather and father might not be wasted and lost by their quarrels, and in a moment the house and line of their prophet Shaikh Sufi be annihilated. She continued with words so effective (a thing unusual in a woman, and particularly in those regions) and with such eloquence that she got them to desist from every evil design they had against one another, and to make friends in her presence . . . having them swear . . . to preserve the throne for Muhammad Khudabandeh, her brother.

“In these circumstances the talk spread in the town that the king was dead, so the populace rose and, making a great tumult, went to the royal residence, crying out that they wished to see their king. His sister together with the seven ‘captains’ decided to cause one clothed in the royal garments to appear on a high roof and address the crowd in a loud voice such as Isma'il had been accustomed to use, and to make with

¹ October 1576 is at variance with the preceding account B, which is precise as to the 25th November being the date. As to the year, C account conflicts with B, and seems less reliable.

² These names in the manuscript copy are so misspelt as to be unrecognizable.