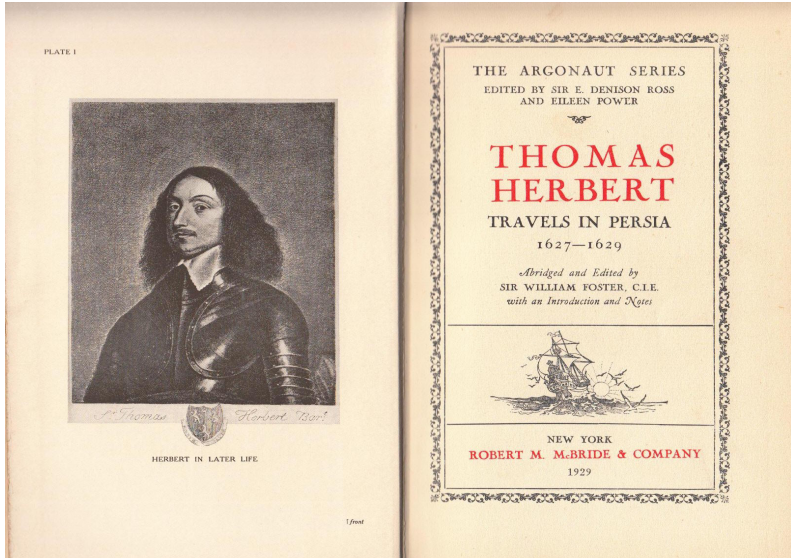


უცხოური წყაროები საქართველოს შესახებ
FOREIGN SOURCES ON GEORGIA



Thomas Herbert, Travels in Persia. 1627-1629*

(Extract)

Abbas by diverse wives had several children, for whose education neither cost nor care was spared. Of most hope were Ismael, Soffy-mirza, Codobanda-Sultan, and Emangoly, four brave young Princes. The two first were begot on Gordina, daughter of Simon-cawn; the latter two of Martha, daughter of Scander-mirza, both Georgians, both Christians. The first lady was brought thence by Kurchiki-cawn, the other by Shaw-Tamas-Coolibeg, both being Per-

* See pages 192-215: Elguja Khintibidze – The Path of *The Man in a Panther-Skin* to England and English Historical Sources.

sians, both favourites: all of them so dear to Abbas that it seemed he then had got the elixir of earthly happiness: his wives were so incomparably beautiful, his favourites so exactly faithful; and his sons so lively the characters of his person, policy, and courage – reciprocally joying the aged King, and overjoying the warlike Persians. But it is commonly observed that, as the most excellent things alter soonest and that no day is so serene that is not shadowed with some cloud, so this candour and perfection in these youthful Princes quickly vanished. For Ismael (when by reason of his delight in arms and quick signs of magnanimity the Asiatic world gazed and admired him) in an infernal cloud of poison went down to an untimely grave at nineteen, in the meridian of his splendour. Soffy-mirza, dogged by a like adverse destiny, though elevated at first for revealing a conspiracy, was in the end at equal years thrown down and crushed to death, after the dumb *capigi* had got a hateful victory, mere jealousy in the King commanding it. And Emangoly, ere his popular applause could hatch his ruin, upon conference with a witch that understood the *almuten* [i. e. horoscope] of his nativity, perceiving that short life attended him, grows fearful of his sire's inconstancy, and in a deep and disconsolate melancholy evaporates his sad spirits, leaving the expectation of hazard and sovereignty to Codobanda Sultan, surnamed Soffee, who (made wise by his brother's miseries) so prudently behaved himself in duty to the King, and in a pleasing and safe distance to the people, that Abbas dotes, the people celebrate, and an uncontrollable good fortune seems to dandle him. Affability, bounty, loyalty, courage, and experience in arms at home and abroad; the Persian monarchy, Turk, Arab, Mogul and Tartar admiring, fearing, and commending him in several eulogies: so as his own left nothing unsaid or uninvented that might honour him; and his enemies, without giving their thoughts the lie, could not but idolize him. Who for all that (not, like our common spirits, afflated by every vulgar breath upon every act deity themselves, and conceit all great additions of honour below their merris) stood immovable; sorry he grew so popular; modestly chiding them for flattery; and condemned himself of hypocrisy by suffering his victories to be so gilded, since what he had or did was

but a reflex of his father's virtue, which he doubted might suffer an eclipse by his accumulation. Oh! how execrable is this marrow-fretting scab of jealousy and envy ! ... Is Abbas a King, a father? Does clemency belong to any attribute more properly? Is Soffee-Sultan-mirza a Prince, his son? On whom can he more justly confer his love ? In whom should virtue rather dwell? Where can there be a better centre? Poor Prince! the path he treads to add lustre to his father's diadem and to oblige his country betrays his steps, and entices him to an affrighting precipice; for, the more he indulges his father, it serves as fuel to an unjust jealousy; the more he dignifies his country by his good success against the Turk, the more applause the people crown him with, but Abbas fears the more his popularity. Yea, so far fears, so much degenerates from paternal piety, that without pity or regard of justice (which makes Kings more beautiful than when circled with diadems) he contrives his ruin.

During these his cabinet-machinations, the Prince brandishes his steel in proud Arabia, where, after several conquests, the victor himself became captivated. For an Arabian Princess of great beauty (and in such bodies usually are impaled the fairest souls) fettered him; but such was his bravery and worth as he quickly redeemed himself, and made her his prisoner. By this lady he had two children, Soffy and Fatima, a name given her (as I suppose) in memory of Fatima, ... This young Princess Fatima was no less loved by Soffee-Mirza, the sire, than doted on by the grandsire Abbas. [Abbas] seeks to enrage by abusing him whom he loved most dearly, Magar, an Arab, the Prince's tutor, a faithful and prudent servant. ... Such was Magar, whom Abbas calls for, and, in lieu of rewarding him for his son's generous education, darts him a stern frown, accusing him of pride, and charging him that he had bewitched the Prince with a disloyal ambition. Magar for all his prudence sees not the venom prepared; and therefore in an humble but confident innocence excuses and endeavours to quiet him; but the more he vindicates himself, and the clearer he made the Mirza's [Prince's] loyalty appear, the more he exasperates the King; ...for forthwith the blood-thirsty *capigis* break in and strangle him. ... The Prince (then in action against the Tartar) has notice of it. Whereupon, as a man void

of sense, immediately he leaves the camp; and, being come to Court, ... The Prince, inflamed with passion, in that distraction imagines he saw Magar a-strangling; and in that ecstasy unsheaths his sword, vowing to rescue him. ... (by some fair terms first disarming him) invites him into another room, and (pretending he was not very well) withdrawing himself, commanded seven big-boned villains, deaf and dumb, through a trap-door to issue into the room armed with bloody minds and deadly bow-strings; whose very looks as well as habits and weapons quickly betray their office and intention, ... The Prince innocently admires [i.e. wonders at] the cause; and if oratory or other way of entreaty could have wrought remorse in these hell-hounds, only till he knew the ground of this cruel command, he had afforded it; ... he flew upon those monsters, now one, then another receiving such testimonies of his courage that (ere they could fasten upon him their ghastly twanging bow-strings) he sent three of them to the Devil; and for some time defended himself. ... So at last they fastened their nooses on him, who now for want of breath was a dead man; and the villains had triumphed in his further tortures had not the King (who it seems was not far off) prevented it, commanding them only to pinion him, and (before he could recover sense and strength) by drawing a flaming steel before his eyes made him stark blind; forbidding him the sight of what he most loved, wife, babes, friends, and Magar's carcass. ...

The loss of this brave Prince was quickly rumoured: all Persia mourns, ... The Prince, when he perceived his own undoing (the eye of reason lent him such a sight), having cursed his birth, his fame, his loyalty, and (which is most sad) his parent, by many frantic threats vows his destruction; but finds his revenge impossible; yet at that conceit roars hideously, and not to be comforted till Suliman-mirza, Kurchiki-cawn, and other his kinsmen and quondam favourites flocked about him, and by their miserable examples dictate patience; ...

In those discontented times Abbas kept his orb, moving like another Saturn; for now he imagines his crown fixed close to his head, nothing appearing that might disturb his quiet; and amongst his delights nothing so much pleased him as young Fatima. ... Court

and kingdom admired his love to this pretty favourites, and no less rejoiced in it; for by this innocent lady they oft-times found the way to expel his rage, ... But what joy has the blinded Prince, since he cannot participate? Revenge delights him more; that word as music best pleases the infernal fancy of this melancholy Mirza, not caring how detestable, so Abbas suffered. ... For, albeit he passionately loved Fatima, yet hearing how his father doted on her, that afresh begets his hate, yea hatches the innocent's confusion.

Revenge had plunged him headlong into a whirlpool of unnatural barbarism, insomuch as, when the pious child came (in an unlucky hour) to bring him comfort, and by all symptoms of duty to express a lovely obedience, the wretch grasps and in a lymphatic fury whirls her neck, ...The astonished Princess his wife cries out: his sight deceived him, that it was Fatima! – little dreaming that he therefore martyred her because Fatima. And, as if that had not been enough (to prevent the King of a successor), hearing young Soffee's voice dolorously crying out of for Fatima, winged with rage he gropes for him; but by the Princess's interposing the child escaped, or else had lost (what he now enjoys) the Persian diadem.

Abbas, when he had notice of this tragedy, grows so outrageously passionate that many feared he would become his own executioner. But, when he had drenched his sorrow in a sea of salt tears, he moderates his spleen, and revives upon hopes of additional punishment, vowing to retaliate his distracted act in the height of cruelty: which being told the Prince, had so terrible a reply, with a million of dismal curses added, that the King was as one astonished. To conclude, after he had tired out a few more minutes with impatience, and considered that death only sets man free from the misery of this world by breaking asunder the chains of bondage, the third day he put a period to his life by quaffing up a cup of poison. ... Nevertheless, the King showed needless ceremony in his obsequies. The disconsolate Princess sequestered herself from the sight of man; but since her son's coming to the crown, ... banished her discontent and in some measure assuaged her sorrow, I could not learn. But for Abbas himself, he bade the world farewell a little after our departure.