

Iran Colloquium Presents

A Year in the Life of Shah 'Abbas: 1607



Shah 'Abbas's long and important reign (1587-1629) is recorded in several contemporary Persian chronicles, notably Iskandar Beg Munshi's *'Alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*. The recently discovered *Afdal al-tawarikh* by Fadli Beg Khuzani Isfahani adds considerably to the pool of information available, on many levels, among them details of the Shah's patronage of architecture and urban development. This paper will look at a particular year, 1016/1607, in which Fadli Beg records an extraordinary burst of activity on the part of 'Abbas, not only in Isfahan, Mashhad and Farahabad, but also the family's dynastic shrine in Ardabil. In addition, however, it examines the chronological problems inherent in the chronicles of both Iskandar Beg and Fadli Beg, and in consolidating their information into a single coherent narrative that is consistent also with other independent information. Which year, in fact, are we talking about? After considering these chronological problems, we will focus particularly on 'Abbas's patronage of Ardabil and neighbouring shrines, both in his attention to building works and in his pious endowments.

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Charles Melville is Professor of Persian History and Director of Studies in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge, and a fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. Professor Melville's work focuses on the history of the Middle East and Iran, especially the Mongol and Safavid periods; mediaeval Persian historiography; and the illustration of Persian manuscripts. He is also Director of the Cambridge Shahnama Project. His publications include *A History of Persian Earthquakes* (Cambridge, 1982); *The Seismicity of Egypt, Arabia and the Red Sea* (1994), *Amir Chupan and the Decline of the Ilkhanate* (1998). He is the joint editor of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7; as well as editor of *History and Literature in Iran*, and *History of Safavid Persia* (Pembroke Papers, vols 1 and 4 respectively). Professor Melville is currently a Harvard Aga Khan Program in Islamic Architecture Fellow.

Friday, April 25, 12:00 - 1:30 pm
Whitney Humanities Center, room 208
53 Wall St.

Light lunch will be provided

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