

Abbas Pasha: A Ruler at Odds

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Abstract

This paper explores the legacy of Abbas Hilmi I the Viceroy of Egypt (from 1848 to 1854) and examines the ambiguities and largely blurred historical realities of his reign. It seeks to provide new insights to this rich but considerably shady period and reveal part of its mystery. More importantly, it re-reads Abbas pasha's history in the hope to produce a counter and rather unbiased narrative of his reign. It also aims to challenge the wide-held negative view of Abbas Hilmi I which long rested in the Egyptian collective memory. At the same time, the paper brings to light some other historical sources, either ignored or entirely passed by, that offer a key parameter in understanding Abbas' reign.

The early beginning:

Abbas I was the son of Tousson and the grandson of Muhammad Ali pasha. He was born in 1813¹ and lost his father at an early age. Accordingly, his grandfather raised him up and trained him to primacy.

It should be noted here that Abbas grew up in a divided household torn by internal conflicts, hostilities, greed, jealousies and most of all incessant contention for power. Love was nearly lost among all the descendants of Muhammad Ali.² In short, it was a poisonous atmosphere full of intrigues which must have left its indelible marks on him since his childhood.

Suffice to say that Abbas himself suspected the indulgence of Muhammad Ali in the death of Tousson (Abbas' father). He believed that his grandfather decided to get rid of his own son Tousson because of his increasing popularity among the army. Abbas even informed Charles Murray the British Consul General in Egypt at that time about his suspicions. He once told Murray that Muhammad Ali was much alarmed of such growing popularity which he regarded it a grave threat to his position. Therefore, the furious father, in a fit of anger, made his decision to poison his son in cold blood³ which contradicted with the official narrative about Tousson's plague-stricken death in 1815.⁴

It seems that this rumor had spread widely thus many people came to believe it including Abbas himself. In his unflinching search for the truth, Abbas tried to interrogate some of the old servants who outlived his father to know from them what really happened to his father. Undoubtedly, such perplexity must have disturbed his internal peace since an early age and heavily tortured him.

Similarly, Abbas eye witnessed another horrible incident that had vigorously shaken him. One night, his grandfather decided to execute his daughter Nazli because of her scandalous manners that defamed the entire family. This decision had seemingly terrified the young Abbas who spent the whole night interceding before his grandfather on her behalf till at last he abandoned the idea and pardoned her.⁵

At the same time, Muhammad Ali was according to Artin bey, who was one of his close assistants then, quite jealous of his elder son Ibrahim. Therefore, he wished Abbas to succeed him and trained him well for that day.⁶

Clearly, the young Abbas was smart enough to rightly interpret the Machiavellian schemes of his grandfather and to feel such hidden jealousies which aroused his own suspicions more and more in his grandfather. Needless to say such suspicions even if lacked concrete evidence to support, had embittered his life and tainted his thoughts ever after while these early incidents which he experienced had a lasting impact on him. They ripped his very being and rendered him insecure. No wonder, he always suffered anxiety and was extremely haunted with fears.

In the same context, Abbas and his uncle Ibrahim pasha were always at loggerheads. He was extremely disappointed of his uncle whom he believed wished to take his life. To one's surprise, Abbas was also

positive that it was his grandfather Muhammad Ali who sow the seeds of dissention and enmity between them to safe-guard his absolute power.⁷

Abbas repeatedly saw his grandfather serving his own self- interests at the expense of his family's unity and coherence. This was the time when Abbas realized the decay of his own family whose members were self-centered and individually-oriented. That's why; he was filled with disgust towards them. It is very likely that the paradox of his nature was largely due to such an atmosphere where he was first raised.

Things were to worsen for Abbas as his grandfather Muhammed Ali predicted his assassination.⁸ Obviously, such a prophesy had continued to chase him relentlessly all along his life and upset his internal peace. Nevertheless, these permanent fears that accompanied Abbas didn't impede him from pursuing his promising career.

As mentioned before, Abbas was trained since his boyhood to undertake big responsibilities⁹ since his grandfather Muhammad Ali was preparing him to rule Egypt one day. At the age of eight, he was sent to the college of Abu Zaabel and after a while he was sent to the college of Al Khankah where he studied Mathematics, military engineering as well as Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages. When he reached fifteen, he was removed from school to commence his practical training¹⁰. He was first appointed as governor of Gharbiyya province. It is worth mentioning that his grandfather monitored his performance carefully and kept an eye on him. Actually, he used to instruct Abbas on regular basis to remarkably enhance his performance. He also repeatedly reminded him that he will be his successor one day, therefore his attitude must befit his position and his status. At the same time, he warned him against inflicting the subjects so as not to provoke their repugnance.¹¹

On another occasion, Muhammad Ali roughly rebuked his grandson for causing the delay of some works. He wrote to him on the 20th of Dhulqeda 1250 H. in a very sharp language:

"Abbas,

*Look after your work and put idleness aside otherwise you will have to quit your office and you will be replaced by someone else. In this case you will be held to blame for delaying work and will let me down"*¹²

Certainly, these early lessons which Abbas learnt at the hands of his grandfather would later bear its fruits. They were much like a valuable Manual or a blueprint for rule which his grandfather had generously endowed him with. As time lapsed, Abbas continued to rise in ranks till he became the president of the council of ministers and the governor of Cairo.¹³

To his credit, he demonstrated a satisfactory performance in his new office in spite of his relatively young age.¹⁴ Moreover, Abbas also took part in the Syrian war and headed a division there under the command of his uncle Ibrahim.¹⁵

Yet, Abbas' heated rivalry with his uncle Ibrahim was far intensified and rapidly escalated that it endangered his own life especially after Ibrahim's rise to the throne of Egypt. According to Mr. Levick, the British Vice-Consul in Egypt then, Ibrahim pasha tried to remove Abbas out of his way, thus accused him of malversation during his governorship of Cairo. As Abbas suspected his uncle's intentions towards him, he decided to temporarily leave Egypt in order to save his life. With the help of Murray, Abbas made a narrow escape to Hijaz. He sailed on board of a British steamship called "*Ferooz*" and headed towards Hijaz. To justify this move that reflected his natural cautiousness and prudence, Abbas expressed his wish to perform pilgrimage and managed to get Ibrahim's consent for his departure by this way. Nevertheless, Ibrahim sent his agents after him at Suez but Abbas had already left to Jiddah at their arrival. That's how he was saved and stayed in Mecca till his uncle's death.¹⁶

Ascension to power:

After the death of Ibrahim pasha, Abbas was summoned from Hijaz to succeed him.

Interestingly, People cheered and rejoiced when Abbas rose to the throne of Egypt on the heels of Ibrahim's abrupt rule. They well received such news unlike the case when they received the news of the investiture of

his uncle Ibrahim shortly before. Murray described people's feelings on hearing the *Khatti Sharif* that invested Abbas in office:

*"The occasion of this solemnity seemed to give universal satisfaction to all classes, and, instead of the ominous silence which prevailed on the day of the investiture of Ibrahim Pasha, the air was yesterday rent with cries of 'Abbas Pasha forever.'"*¹⁷

No wonder, 2000 Bedouins waited for him at Suez to be the first to greet him and pay him the due respect at his arrival. In Cairo, he was met with applaud likewise especially from lower classes.¹⁸ This indicates that people put much hope on him and expected a lot from him as a ruler.

On his ascension to the throne, Abbas went to his grandfather at his palace in Shubra on the 28th of Nov. 1848 to bid his grandfather farewell and kiss his hand before his departure to Istanbul for investiture. It seems that Abbas felt morally committed to do so with his grandfather who was the founder of this dynasty: *"Avant départir, Abbas eut un second bon mouvement don't l'histoire doit lui tenir compte. Il alla rendre une visite d'hommage à Méhémet-Ali qu'Ibrahim avait profondément négligé. Malgré la faiblesse de son esprit, le vieux souverain le reconnut et le reçut avec joie. Ce devoir accompli, Abbas descendit le Nil et prit la mer..."*¹⁹

Abbas had a friendly talk with his grandfather in the presence of Nubar pasha who recalled this conversation and wrote it down in his memoirs. In the course of this conversation, Muhammad Ali told Abbas in a rather warning language: *"I cursed Ibrahim because he shut me up thus God punished him, so don't behave with me in the same way if you wish not to be cursed likewise."* At that conjuncture, Abbas gently kissed his grandfather's hand and assured him that he was still their master and he would always be²⁰

This early visit totally contradicts with the claims that Abbas was ungrateful to his grandfather and treated him with much contempt.²¹ In contrast, Abbas had even continued to cherish his grandfather's memory after his death. This appears clearly in his *waqfiyyah* deed that dates back to 9th of Ragab 1269 H (1853) where he devoted part of his fortune (150, 000) Piasters to perform religious rituals inside his grandfather's mosque at the citadel as well as inside his tomb.²²

Early quick reforms:

Also before his departure to Istanbul, Abbas enacted a series of quick reforms that were meant to address several long neglected issues like abolishing the capitation tax that long caused public resentment.²³ At the same time, he abolished monopoly imposed by Muhammad Ali on the trade of the Sudan and Abyssinia as he realized that all such revenues must go to the country rather than the personal treasury of the vice-roy. As a result, this revolutionary measure secured big profits to Egypt in entirety:

*"...le commerce avec l'Abyssinie et le Soudan, qui avait été monopolisé par Méhémet-Ali, fut rendu libre. C'était une brèche profonde dans le trésor du vice-roi, mais c'était la richesse pour l'Égypte.... qui ne devait en rien diminuer le mérite de l'immense et radicale mesure dont le pays -entier allait profiter...."*²⁴

That's how Abbas proved to be brave, energetic, and progressive ruler who had very liberal thoughts in this particular aspect²⁵ which must have impressed his contemporaries at the beginning of his reign.

Abbas trip to Istanbul

Like his late uncle, Abbas travelled to Istanbul to personally receive his investiture *Firman* from the Sultan. It seems that this trip was an exploratory one meant to discover the intensions of the Porte towards him so as to re-assess his situation. It also meant to express his loyalty to the Sultan and to show his good will at the beginning of his reign so as to gain the Sultan's trust and placate him. Abbas was well-received there²⁶ and was acquainted with the Ottoman viziers. They showed him respect and cordially treated him as a colleague who stood on an equal footing.²⁷ Undoubtedly, such a friendly reception must have rendered Abbas more relieved and much self-confident.

Abbas' reign revisited:

On examining the reign of Abbas I in Egypt, a number of facts pop to the surface and reveal themselves. One can safely say that if Muhammad Ali was to be credited with the buildup of the dynastic state and in Egypt, it was Abbas who bore the heavy brunt of installing the hereditary rule of Muhammad Ali dynasty in Egypt and consolidated it. In other words, Abbas was the one who made the dynastic order a tangible fact on the

ground and at the same time strove to preserve Egypt's self-autonomy. Besides, he was able to well-maintain the state's administrative machine, to expand its apparatus as well as to give a thrust to its economy. In his unflinching search for an identity, Abbas refused to be a copy of his predecessors or to blindly follow their path. On the contrary, he developed his own rhetoric and had his own way²⁸.

Early encounters

When Abbas first rose to power in 1848, Egypt's autonomy was at stake. The death of Ibrahim Pasha and the mental disorder that had befallen Muhammad Ali must have tempted the Porte to curtail Egypt's autonomy²⁹. The Porte was in fact endeavoring to restore Egypt back to its former status before the expansion wars of Muhammad Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, the settlement of 1840 and the Imperial decree of 1841.

As a shrewd manipulator, Abbas sensed a storm brewing in the horizon. Accordingly, he developed real and serious concerns about Egypt's future. It was quite clear that he had no intention whatsoever to sacrifice Egypt's autonomy on the Ottoman altar at any cost. On the contrary, he was determined more than ever to maintain Egypt's current status that was defined by London Treaty, ratified by the imperial *Firman* that followed and guaranteed by the European powers.

Nevertheless, Abbas was keen to improve his relations with the Porte at the beginning of his reign. He continued to appear in the guise of the submissive vice-roy and to show allegiance in order to satisfy his master and evade his harm.

It is not surprising that Abbas headed to Istanbul for his formal investment in office. Abbas also brought valuable gifts to the Porte and promised to buy steamers and put them at his disposal: ". . . *making enormous presents to the Sultan's family at Constantinople, and talking of buying steamers as if they were plenty and cheap as figs.*"³⁰ Furthermore, he accepted all the demands of the Porte concerning downsizing his army and navy.

After his return from Istanbul, Abbas also received three large portraits of Sultan Abdul Majeed sent to him from the Imperial court in a large ceremony and they were paraded across Cairo streets, exhibited in the citadel and finally hung on the walls of public offices as a sign of loyalty and subordination.³¹

That's how, Abbas earnestly tried to placate the Porte and to gain his blessings rather than invoke his curses. This was probably a maneuver meant to avoid unnecessary complications, confrontations or collisions with the Porte that might negatively affect Egypt's status.

It is quite clear that Abbas when proceeded within such a course, he aimed to maintain a sort of equilibrium between his subordination to the Porte and the degree of self –autonomy which his grandfather and his uncle secured. However, he was in reality walking on a tight rope and had to be very careful so as not to fall down.

No wonder, Abbas' recurrent pretence of bearing the Turkish stamp had been misleading. It caused some of his contemporaries to believe that he was too weak to depart from Ottoman fetters and misinterpreted it as increasing subservience Ottoman control:

*". . . the fabric of her [Egypt's] independence which old Mehemet Ali took such pains to raise has tumbled down before completed, she is again a Province of Turkey"*³²

On the other hand, the increasingly growing European, especially French, influence in Egypt had seemingly alarmed Abbas more. It had spurred his intent of reducing it so as to stem its tide.

Abbas later revealed himself to Mr. Walne the British consul in Egypt at that time to justify his actions. He complained to him that the French were in full control of Egypt's administration. Therefore, he had to withstand such creeping influence and to restore his hold over the country: "*The pasha explained that when he came into power, he found every administration of the country directly or in-directly in the hands of the French.*"³³

The repelling attitude of many other Europeans who resided in Egypt and skimmed its milk had added fuel to fire:

*"He found himself exposed to a pack of hungry Europeans and fawning natives whose one desire was to enrich themselves at his expense..... his conduct was ignoble, yet Egypt was saved from foreign pillage under his reign-----a contrast to the days of Said and Ismail who prided themselves on the adoption of an opposite policy"*³⁴

The majority of those European adventurers who flocked to Egypt since the time of Muhammad Ali appeared to be a group of scrupulous opportunists who were driven solely by self-interest. They didn't mind inflict the whole country if this would serve them. No wonder, Abbas felt highly committed to check them:

*"Let us be frank: Europeans have done more harm than good in Egypt; that is to say, whenever they have appeared, except as mere commercial men, bringing the goods of their own countries, and anxious to take away the surplus of the luxuriant crops of the valley of the Nile. As political advisers, partly, perhaps, because men undertook to advise who were fit only for the counting-house, partly because their own interests were concerned, their intermeddling has been most pernicious. Even the benefits, for some such there are, which have been conferred by their wisdom, have been mingled with an immense amount of misery."*³⁵

Some others treated Abbas himself with much arrogance like Bendetti the French consul in Egypt who didn't pay him the due respect. He once called upon Abbas at his palace without fixing an appointment while wearing a robe de chambre which offended Abbas and infuriated him.³⁶

In addition, Abbas himself wasn't fascinated with Western culture like his successors. On the contrary, he was so much proud of his own indigenous culture and openly professed it. He once declared that he belonged part and parcel to Turkish culture: *"Il déclara qu'il était Turc et voulait régner en Turc; croyant, et prêt à vivre et à mourir en croyant."*³⁷

This declaration amounted to an implicit declaration of war on Europeans as Colonel Seve (Soliman pasha) interpreted it: *"C'était une déclaration de guerre."*³⁸

In the same vein, Abbas resisted the wholesale adoption of Western culture or the so-called Westernization. To be more precise, he rejected all forms of Western guardianship and abhorred their domineering tendencies.

More significantly, he always suspected their intensions towards Egypt and held them responsible for what happened to his grandfather. He himself had witnessed the downfall of his grandfather because of the lobbying of the European powers against him. He couldn't forget either how France in particular broke faith with his grandfather and let him down by joining the four great powers in the settlement of 1840-1841.³⁹ It comes as a little surprise that Abbas grew alert from them. Accordingly, he opened his reign with dismissing a massive number of Europeans (mainly French) from his service.⁴⁰

Furthermore, he formalized his relations with foreign consuls and minimized every possible contact⁴¹ to hold the line against any further penetration in the Egyptian society. In the same manner, he set restrictions on their visits to his palace. They had to seek his permission first before calling upon him and he made it clear that he would only let them in if they had some good reasons for meeting with him. He also assured Nubar pasha that he would be always there for them and would protect them if they were subject to any persecution or if they faced any troubles. However, he had no intension to turn his palace to a coffee house or a meeting point for those Europeans who had nothing to do at their leisure time.⁴²

Certainly, such a move, with which he inaugurated his reign, had proved of ominous results for him as he would pay dearly for it ever after. Undoubtedly, the harder line which Abbas took with Europeans didn't appeal to them while his austerity measures had harmed their interests and invoked their curses. He had in fact stirred a hornet nest and nurtured their hostility for years to come. That's to say these early measures had outraged the Europeans and invited their retaliation. They would never let Abbas go with it and adopted a vindictive policy against him. That's how Abbas appeared like a man moving into a slippery path or better say into a minefield.

No wonder, Bendetti the French Consul- General in Egypt warned his government of losing their envied status in Egypt due to Abbas' new policy that didn't work in their favor.⁴³

In fact, Abbas would later regret it and confess that this early but fatal tactical mistake had exposed him to innumerable lethal blows that imperiled his position in Egypt. Thus Abbas set the stage for the rise of a

fierce opposing front that worked for his collapse. It comes as a little surprise that a serious battle awaited him:

*"that having by little and little reduced their power, gradually replacing the principal French officers employed by his grand-father, he had brought upon himself the continual attacks of the French consul general, as well as of individuals of that nation; that not only had he been abused and written against, but that, as he had reason to suppose, intrigue had recently been set on foot at Constantinople with the object of actually driving him from the Pashalic of Egypt, and of replacing him by another member of the family, supposed to be more favorable to French interests"*⁴⁴

Besides, his family relatives with whom he collided likewise who were known with their French sentiments took the side of the French against Abbas all along. It is not surprising that they allied together to remove him of their way: *"every male member of his family (excepting his own son) hates him cordially, for they all are 'enfants de la France"*⁴⁵

Those relatives whom he badly inflicted when denied them the right to Muhammad Ali's property together with the high officials whom he dismissed and confiscated their lands launched a fierce campaign against him in the Imperial court:

*". . . have found themselves set aside in the new order of things . . . and, as is but too often the case, personal disappointment has made them patriots."*⁴⁶

Needless to say that this campaign was supported by the French circles in Istanbul and in France itself. This was the time when the Imperial honeymoon between the Porte and Abbas was approaching its end.

With the mounting fears of dethroning him because of his enemies' plots in Istanbul, Abbas realized that he was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. The British General Consul in Egypt described in one of his reports Abbas' weak and rather unenvied position as following:

*"The Sublime Porte hates Abbas Pasha and would be glad to get rid of him by any means fair or foul, the French hate him for having overthrown their dominion in Egypt which, when I [Charles Murray] arrived here, was exclusive and all-powerful; the representatives of the other great Powers dislike him on account of his constant and unconcealed leaning to English interests, and last of all, his family they are supported or instigated by a strong party at Constantinople, and some of them are of a character sufficiently depraved to make it probable that they will not scruple at any means that might bring them nearer to the succession."*⁴⁷

On examining part of the correspondences between Murray and Canning, one can deduce that Abbas foes in Istanbul had spread false rumors about Abbas rebellious schemes. That's why Murray repeatedly confirmed that *"there are no rebellious thoughts in his head, even his enemies cannot accuse him of the more dangerous and daring vices, such as ambition and a thirst for blood. He is indeed most suspicious, especially of all that emanates from Reschid Pasha but he is naturally an indolent man and fond of his horses and his pleasures"*⁴⁸

It is not surprising that Abbas grew increasingly worried. As a result, he had to move swiftly to ward off such stabs and to find a way out of this vicious circle where he was entangled. He focused his attention on preserving Egypt's integrity, self-autonomy, special status and most of all to ensure having a greater say in its own affairs. Finding himself in a critical situation, Abbas threw his lot with Great Britain to save the day. He wanted a powerful ally to counter-balance the aforementioned combined pressures exerted on the Porte by his enemies there and to tip the scales to his favor. In short, the urgency of the situation had dictated on him to follow this course and get closer to Britain.

Without waste of time, Abbas cunningly made a convenient offer to the British government leaving little doubt that he was a formidable unyielding opponent. He expressed his willingness to grant them a concession to construct a railway in Egypt to serve their interests and in return he expected their protection and support in Istanbul:

"For himself it had from the first been his anxious desire to be always on the best possible terms with, and to serve to his utmost, the government of England; and in return he had hoped to have the support of its cabinet, and consequently of its representative at the Porte. -----, the Pasha is prepared to make a regular and efficient railway between Alexandria and Cairo.. He must first, he said, distinctly understand the

*intentions of the British government. He was not going to make railroads for his own accommodation, or because the Egyptian treasury has any surplus funds to employ in such operations, but because our government has expressed a wish to that effect..... In return he hoped and expected to have the support of Her Majesty's Government at Constantinople, and its protection in case of need against the obvious designs of the French on Egypt. If he could have the support and protection he required, and his position were secured by the well-known power of British influence, he would not only make the railroads in question, but in general do everything that, consistently with his subordinate position in reference to the Porte, might be agreeable to the views of Her Majesty's Government....."*⁴⁹

Abbas proved to be far-sighted as tension erupted between him and the Sublime Porte who revealed his true colors when made his decision to implement the *Tanzimat* reforms in Egypt.⁵⁰

It was evidently a trap was set to ensnare Abbas and bring his downfall. If Abbas would openly reject its implementation in Egypt, he would spell his end as he would be deposed on account of disobedience. On the other hand, if Abbas agreed to its implementation, this would clear the way for the Porte to resume full control of Egypt turning a blind eye to the settlement of 1840-1841.

Nonetheless, Abbas refused to be a Porte's lackey. Indeed he wanted to improve his relations with the Porte to counterbalance the mounting European influence yet he was reluctant to be reduced to a mere puppet ruler in Egypt. Accordingly, he had to take a firm stand in this to be -or -not to be- battle with the Porte:

*" Not that it is probable he intends to play the old game over again and throw off the yoke of Stamboul; but there is certainly a very arduous struggle now carrying on, both by open and underhand means, between Egypt and the Porte. There is an infinity of points of difference between the vassal and his lord; but the gist of the matter is, that the former wishes to preserve all the privileges, to be treated with the same indulgence, to be left with the same freedom of action, as his grandfather; he wishes to remain, in fact, a vassal little more than in name, free to indulge any arbitrary whims; whilst the latter is attempting, with some reason,—with great reason indeed,—to reduce Egypt to the same subjection as the rest of the Ottoman Empire."*⁵¹

It should be noted that Abbas refused to give away his right as a viceroy to implement capital sentences. Therefore, he wasn't to accept the penal code of *Tanzimat* without modifications. He even believed that his deprivation of exercising that right would pose a grave threat to his authority as a governor. Accordingly, it would lead the country to a dark tunnel of chaos and disorder.⁵²

In response, Abbas had a number of traders in Cairo and Alexandria as well as some eminent figures in the Egyptian society who sent a petition to Murray objecting to the orders of the Sublime Porte and expressing their wish to preserve the *Wali's* rights and the country's security.⁵³

At the same time, Abbas went on fortifying his position in Egypt and remained griddled for action. As a precaution measure, Abbas supplied the forts in Alexandria with arms and ammunition to withstand any Ottoman attack.⁵⁴

The railway concession which Abbas granted to Britain had obviously added fuel to fire and worsened the relations between Abbas and the Porte. This move was interpreted as an infringement to the Porte's supremacy over Egypt since Abbas granted the concession without referring first to the Porte. Abbas arch-rival in Istanbul Rashid pasha had seemingly exploited this move to have the Sublime Porte either depose Abbas or force him to write a letter asking his permission to construct the railway in order to humiliate Abbas.

In order to complete the deal with Abbas, the British diplomatic circles worked hard in Istanbul to reach a settlement with the Porte in this regard. Palmerstone himself had instructed the British ambassador in Istanbul Lord Canning to work in favor of Abbas there.⁵⁵ He also continued to exchange correspondences with Canning and Murray to discuss all possible solutions in the hope to ease tension between the two parties.

In the same vein, two British ships were also sent to Alexandria, at Abbas request, on the pretext of examining the condition of the obelisk near Cleopatra's Needle which was gifted to Britain by Muhammad Ali. However, its real purpose was to show the good will of the British government towards Abbas to rest assured.⁵⁶

Thanks to these consistent British efforts, the crisis came to an end. Abbas was persuaded by Murray at Palmerstone's instructions to write a letter to the Porte to get his consent on account of observing etiquette and formalities.⁵⁷

On the other side, the Porte ultimately submitted to British influence and issued an Imperial *Firman* authorizing the construction of the railway.⁵⁸

Regarding the introduction of the *Tanzimat* to Egypt, Murray sided with Abbas and asked Sir Canning to convince the grand vizier not to try to upset Egypt's internal peace, stability and prosperity: "not think it necessary to change and overthrow all the internal regulations under which Egypt has attained and is daily attaining increased prosperity, merely because the letter of the *Firman* or the prerogative of the sovereign gives a right to do so"⁵⁹

An Ottoman envoy called Fuad Effendi was sent to Egypt to discuss this matter with Abbas. At last, a compromise was reached that allowed Abbas to retain his right to inflict capital sentence for seven years only after reporting the verdict to the Porte⁶⁰ while death sentence was abolished for political offenses.⁶¹

Thus Abbas emerged partly victorious with the help of Britain and proved to his enemies that he wasn't an easy prey as they mistakenly thought. At this juncture, Abbas tried once more to get close to the Porte through having his son Ilhamy propose to the Sultan's daughter. Abbas also sent his son Ilhamy to Istanbul carrying presents and was well-received there. In fact, Ilhamy carried presents to the sultan, that worthied 17,000 purses and promised him steamers and troops to be at his disposal.⁶²

Abbas also decided to participate in the Crimean war in support of the Ottoman Sultan. As a result, he sent part of the Egyptian fleet (twelve ships) as well as marines (about 6750) under the command of Hassan Pasha Al Iskandrany together with land troops (about 19722) divided into six squadrons under the command of Selim Fathi Pasha and equipped with weapons and ammunition.⁶³

This time, Abbas sought to change the law of succession to the throne of Egypt for the sake of his son Ilhamy however; he died before realizing his end.⁶⁴

The blackened image

To his chagrin, Abbas was subject to a fierce black propaganda war that targeted his reputation. His adversaries had vehemently attacked him in an attempt to tarnish his [reputation](#) and to destroy his credibility as a ruler. Through producing and circulating hostile accounts full of allegations and spreading rumors about him and his reign, they almost achieved their goal.

Such distorted and much fragmented accounts usually involved twisting some facts in deliberations or maintaining silence to some others. This outspoken manipulation was meant to provide a misleading picture of Abbas and convey a negative message of his reign. In short, they projected their prejudice against Abbas onto their accounts thus made of him a dreadful monster and created his "demon-like image".⁶⁵ One can safely say it was a form of "character assassination" as Toledano suggests.⁶⁶ That's how they found solace in defaming their long-standing enemy to avenge themselves.

As mentioned before, Abbas had found his path crossed by animosity since the beginning of his reign. He had a stormy relationship with his family members. His strict refusal to hand them down Muhammad Ali's property⁶⁷ as well as confiscating their land and wealth had aroused their enmity.⁶⁸

This dispute had led to their flight to Istanbul. A considerable number of high officials whom he confiscated their land and wealth joined them at Istanbul likewise. There they formed a lobby against Abbas and worked behind the scenes to play off the Porte against him. They all wished have him dethroned so as to recoup their losses and avenge themselves.⁶⁹ Accordingly, they launched their war in "parlors and harems"⁷⁰ in Istanbul rather than in battlefields and spat their poisonous rumors everywhere there.

Many Europeans whom Abbas had either ignored or avoided took an active part likewise in kindling this relentless war against him: "The foreign agents, with whom –he could only converse by proxy, were his bad dreams, and he avoided them as much as possible—far less dreamed of entertaining them, as did his successor, on a scale of truly princely hospitality."⁷¹

Much Offended because of his conservative attitude towards foreigners as well as the lethal blows which he dealt to their financial interests in Egypt, they saved no efforts to demean him: "Abbas was a much better ruler than he has generally been represented by Europeans, to whom he usually displayed a cold, haughty demeanour, and whom he was at no pains to conciliate"⁷²

As a result, he acquired such bad reputation which many of his contemporaries confirmed: "He has been generally misunderstood, and faults and vices have been attributed to him which are libellous and unjust"⁷³

Although, Abbas repeatedly denied his enemies' accusations and tried to refute them through sending envoys to Istanbul to clear things out, he was less successful: "*Many missions have passed from this country to the Porte with the object of warding off the blows that are being aimed at the authority of Abbas Pasha*"⁷⁴

Their plan worked out and his name became closely associated with notoriety, tyranny and excess. He was regarded as an embodiment of all evils and human vices thus turned to be an extremely frightful figure whose name recalled horror at the description of some historical sources: "*The unbounded terror he inspired in all who approached him*"⁷⁵

To be more precise, he was portrayed as an insane abusive self-absorbed tyrant who inflicted harsh penalties⁷⁶ and even killed on a whim: "*The present Pasha of Egypt had, it is said, a lovely Circassian or Georgian wife, named Fatima. It was reported to him that an English officer had been seen passing the window of her harem. It is clear that the officer had no business on such sacred ground, and it was equally clear that Fatima knew nothing of his being there; but asseverations had no weight with the pasha. He had her sewn in a bag and thrown into the Nile!*"⁷⁷

Olympe likewise related the same story of throwing his wife in a sac into the water.⁷⁸

Furthermore, receiving presents of beasts, surrounding himself with as well as buying dogs and hounds from England had added fuel to fire. It enlivened this gloomy image which people easily believed.⁷⁹

It seems that Abbas physical appearance didn't work in his favor too. It caused him to be feared by others as the British military leader Napier stated when first met him in Cairo before his rise to the throne:

*"Much more feared than either loved or respected-----His appearance is not much in his favour, being a dull heavy man, much more resembling a butcher than a Pacha."*⁸⁰

Other contemporaries confirmed this point in particular likewise:

*"His complexion was much darker than that of the majority of his family, most of whom are fair, with reddish beards. Abbas was swarthy, with a scanty beard, short and stout of figure, with a bloated, sensual face, and dull, cruel eyes."*⁸¹

It is very likely that such appearance had added its quota to his unpopularity. Thus he gradually emerged as an awe-struck savage figure devoid of any mercy. He was even depicted in some accounts as an "ogre"⁸² It comes as a little surprise that according to some allegations, the poor peasants at his death kept saying that hell had opened its gates to receive him.⁸³

At the same time, he was either shown as mentally retarded: "*Abbas pasha- I whisper this in your ear- is a moron, almost a mental case incapable of understanding anything or doing anything*"⁸⁴ or a slow learner and lazy at best: "*indolent*"⁸⁵

He was also accused of being a fanatic who was religiously prejudiced against non-muslims whom he victimized:

*"Abbas Pasha, a voluptuary and a bigot, during whose feeble and reactionary rule the prosperity of the country languished....."*⁸⁶

Similarly, he was accused of being a reactionary who fought progress and stood firmly in face of modern civilization: "*striving to put back the shadow on the dial-plate of progress moving in the direction of European civilization....."*⁸⁷

To complete the dark disgraceful picture, he was accused of homosexuality. Flaubert for example while recounting one of his adventures with a prostitute whom he met in Cairo stressed this point about Abbas: "*La Triestina was violently afraid of the police, begged us to make no noise. Abbas Pasha, who is fond only of men, makes things difficult for women*"⁸⁸

It should be noted here that some European Historians blurred all the lines separating his personal life as a man and his public performance as a ruler thus misjudged his reign and debased his person:

*"Abbas enjoys among Europeans a very bad reputation, partly on account of certain private vices regarding which Europeans are much more severe than Orientals, and partly on account of his reserved, haughty demeanour towards the few foreigners whom he admitted to his presence"*⁸⁹

Dispelling charges:

As previously mentioned, Abbas was habitually depicted in the most hateful manner. However, there is a lot to be said in his defense which could refute some of those charges that were customarily though unfairly associated with him. Among those charges are the following:

- Anti-European stance:

Almost all sources agreed upon Abbas dislike of Europeans as reflected in maltreating them. However, such dislike appeared to have stemmed out of fear⁹⁰ rather than arrogance or personal grudge.

In other words, he didn't hate Europeans per se but he hated their dominative practices and their dictated forms of guardianship. He was also afraid of their colonial ambitions and their vicious schemes towards the Muslim world that's why he always tried to withstand them. He hated likewise those Europeans who wanted to skim the country's milk and fatten their coffers at its expense. For all these reasons, he endeavored to stop their penetration in the Egyptian society and fired many of them as mentioned before.

Besides, he held some of them responsible for what happened to his grandfather as well as for the decline that befell the Islamic nation in general. Therefore, he was reluctant to employ those who, from his point of view, had caused: "*.... la ruine ou à l'abaissement de notre nation*"⁹¹

His growing suspicions continued to worry him that's why he strictly prohibited them from visiting the bastions and battalions at Alexandria⁹² lest they should divulge any military secrets to their own countries or use against him in future.

As a matter of fact, many contemporary sources pick and mix some historical incidents to defame Abbas and criticize him for maltreating Europeans especially that of the deportation of the Greeks. It is deemed necessary here to shed light on the context in which this particular incident took place to clarify it.

Actually, it was the Sublime Porte who made that decision of deporting the Greeks from Egypt rather than Abbas himself.⁹³

Nevertheless, Abbas didn't enforce this order which he received from the Porte in Egypt. According to the American consul in Egypt then, Abbas turned a deaf ear to it:

*"I must do Abbas Pacha the justice to say that in this matter he showed either good feeling or indifference, and did not press the execution of the stern edict with zeal"*⁹⁴

He even felt pity for those Greeks and gave hand to the poor among them.⁹⁵

On the other end of the spectrum, Abbas appointed a number of Europeans in his service like AbdAllah bey and Ayrton bey⁹⁶ whom he believed reliable and trustworthy. AbdAllah bey was the one who managed the transit service while Ayrton bey was the tutor of Abbas son Ilhamy and he was charged with teaching him English. He also appointed a private Italian physician in his service.⁹⁷

In the same context, Abbas continued to observe formalities with Europeans even if he wasn't in good terms with them. This appeared vividly in the ceremony he held in honor of the new French consul general when he first arrived at Cairo and presented his credentials to Abbas.⁹⁸ Indeed it wasn't a pompous ceremony as his attendees reported, yet it served its purpose.

Furthermore, Abbas well-received his European guests whom he felt at ease like the famous archeologist Lepsius. He treated him with much courtesy⁹⁹ which proves that he had no natural dislike for Europeans. He was also in good terms with Murray the British consul general in Egypt and sent hunters to the White Nile to catch a hippo for him at his request to be sent to London Zoo.¹⁰⁰

He also well-received Captain Frusher captain of the British steamer Ferooz and tried to reward him for taking him to Hijaz at a critical moment by offering him a good sum of money which the Captain refused and by ordering a carriage to be made for him.¹⁰¹

The famous British commander Napier reported a similar incident. Napier praised Abbas for the princely hospitality with which he received him and his companions despite the fact that they were originally Franks: "*Eleven was the hour appointed to wait upon his Excellency, who sent a brilliant cavalcade to conduct us to his palace, consisting of splendid Arab horses, proudly champing their golden bits, under a profusion of crimson velvet trappings, each led by a sais, or groom, and a tolerable coach dragged by four cream-coloured horses-----However, all things considered, he received us with tolerable politeness. Pipes and coffee were produced, and we were invited to take seats on the Divan.*"¹⁰²

In the same manner, Abbas cordially received the famous German painter Gustav Richter as a guest in his modern Italian villa located near old Cairo that had a wonderful garden and a terrace in the rear. There, Richter studied the local nature and watched Abbas pasha while seated in his garden drinking coffee, smoking pipe and watching some slave girls playing music and dancing. From this scene Richer inspired his famous painting "Egyptian dancing women"¹⁰³

Assigning someone to meet the British tourists and welcome them to the country as well as dedicating some antiquities to the Austrian consul in Egypt furnish another concrete evidence that he didn't naturally hate Europeans in entirety as commonly depicted.¹⁰⁴

Besides, he decided to take part in the industrial exhibition held in England¹⁰⁵ proving that he had no problem what so ever in cooperation with Europeans if this would serve Egypt's interest and open new markets for Egyptian products.

It is very likely that the claim of Abbas maltreatment of Europe had gained momentum because of his inability to communicate with foreigners except through interpreters. This must have constituted a major barrier in his relations with Europeans that might have impeded their interaction and left such impression:

*"He understood and spoke no European language—an exception in his family, all the rest of whom have a thorough knowledge at least of French—and therefore always conversed with foreign agents, whom he saw as seldom as possible, through the medium of an interpreter, which of course prevented much interchange of ideas or feelings"*¹⁰⁶

- Striking Cruelty and despotism:

Since Abbas Time, rumors had widely spread about his unparalleled cruelty that was unheard of together with his undisputed despotism. To thoroughly examine such a claim, one must take into account that cruelty was used by successive ruling elites of Egypt from the time of the Mamluks and till the reign of Khedive Ismail as a safety valve to intimidate their opponents and check their bridle. That's to say it wasn't Abbas who set it in motion as mistakenly thought.

In contrast, Mr. Walne the British consul in Egypt who knew Abbas closely denied such claim: "*it is not true that he was cruel—that is to say that he had a pleasure in simply inflicting pains or was even indifferent to it*"¹⁰⁷

He also confirmed that many rumors that spread about him had proved to be false ones like getting rid of those whom he exiled to the Sudan.¹⁰⁸ To one's surprise, Walne revealed that Abbas sometimes summoned people to his presence and threatened to behead them or beat them to death but in reality it was only a show of power to break the hearts of his enemies or rather "a farce" at his words. Walne went further and ascertained that the proportion of capital punishment in Egypt to its population was very small under Abbas reign if compared with other countries at that time.¹⁰⁹ Besides, it was only applied after a trial and a judicial sentence.¹¹⁰

Undoubtedly, such an end doesn't justify Abbas tyrannical practices or white wash them. It also doesn't conceal his undisputed "despotism"¹¹¹ Yet, it is noteworthy to say that many of such tyrannical practices weren't Abbas' innovation. They were in fact initiated by his predecessors long ago and they were entwined with the autocratic rule of their dynasty:

*"..... Abbas Pasha has taken the old system as he found it.....In fairness, however, we must remind the reader that Abbas Pasha is only answerable for acquiescing in customs handed down. He has not established any new pernicious regulation that we have heard of; and even if he remains perfectly quiescent and leaves things to go their own gait, King Log is better than King Stork. "*¹¹²

In short, they were the sour fruit of the arbitrary system which Muhammad Ali laid its foundation while his descendants highly observed and successfully perpetuated over years.

It is not surprising that the British consul general in Egypt Frederic Bruce believed that all viceroys who belonged to Muhammad Ali dynasty behaved in almost the same manner: "*One viceroy is not much better than another; their eccentricities only assume different shapes*"¹¹³

That's to say they all tended to despotism and committed a lot of cruelties to safe-guard their status and hold their foes in restraint. Gadsby for example reported some atrocities which Muhammad Ali committed earlier:

"Old Mehemet Ali, he said, often complained because he did not bastinado the men enough; but he said he never could do it until they had completely wearied him out. When a man was bastinadoed at the foundry for theft, or for refusing to work, a doctor always stood over him, to feel his pulse, and to tell the brutes who were hewing him to pieces, when to leave off; for the officers always gave them to the very last lash that nature could endure."¹¹⁴

Similarly, he was sharply criticized for his "abominable tyranny"¹¹⁵ who was fully obsessed with the idea of his own aggrandizement even at the expense of "the comfort, the property or the lives of his people"¹¹⁶

Other historians listed a wide array of Muhammad Ali's cruelties that weren't restricted to his opponents but were also extended to the poor peasants whom he heavily exploited to realize his dreams.

"He has been accused of having had no other object but a selfish craving for power and riches, of having decimated the population, and of having ruined his country, of having increased the misery of the Fellaheen, of having been a vulgar adventurer, and a bloodthirsty tyrant. Nay, French writers have gone so far as to contest him all original initiative."¹¹⁷

Forced labor was on the top of such excesses. He first implemented this system in digging the Mahmoudiah canal¹¹⁸ and continued to apply it till the end of his reign when he used it in the construction of the Nile barrage in 1847.¹¹⁹

However, it was the peasants who footed the bill as thousands of them either starved or worked to death to complete it at the pasha's orders.¹²⁰

Abbas' uncle Ibrahim didn't differ a lot. He enjoyed a bad reputation as a ruler as reported by the travelers who visited Egypt at that time, thus tipping the scales in favor of Abbas: "he (Abbas) certainly occupied a more respectable position than his uncle Ibrahim, whose whole ideas of the duties of government were getting money and playing at soldiers"¹²¹. Suffice to say that in the course of one of Ibrahim' meetings with the chiefs of villages at Mansoura, he listened to their grievances regarding the "Ferda" tax. After hearing them, Ibrahim pointed to the tax collector (called Muallim Ghali) who was seated among the attendees saying that it was his entire fault. Then all of a sudden, Ibrahim pasha drew his gun and shot him in their presence.¹²²

No wonder, people trembled on just hearing their names¹²³ or dared not look to them if they passed nearby like Abdu that old peasant who outlived Muhammad Ali, Ibrahim and Abbas. he once recalled the day when he saw Ibrahim pasha for a few minutes. The poor peasant as he confessed was so much afraid of him that he couldn't even glimpse at him.¹²⁴

Said Pasha was no exception. Suffice to say that he abolished the council of justice and therefore, he could execute anyone (whether hang, drown or shoot) at whim and without trial or judicial sentence.¹²⁵

Hekekyan affirmed to Senior likewise that Said had remarkably changed while in office and "was getting more Abbas- like every month"¹²⁶

In sum, the viceroyalty in Egypt was purely a form of personal despotism:

"The Khedivate under its founder, Mehemet Ali, and his two immediate successors, Ibrahim and Abbas, was a vigorous, intelligent, personal despotism of the Oriental kind, untempered by Western notions of legality. If a man disobeyed orders or was suspected of any tendencies to insubordination, he was summarily and severely punished without going through the intricacies of European judicial procedure."¹²⁷

As a result, fear became their "principal instrument" as Walne cleverly deduced.¹²⁸

It is potently obvious that in their search for absolute power, the successive rulers of this dynasty till the reign of Khedive Ismail didn't mind utilize cruelty, however with varying degrees, to defend their status even if they eventually victimized their own subjects or broke their hearts.

Fanaticism

Abbas was always depicted as an old-fashioned and rather fanatic ruler who was not in good terms with non-muslims and had little regard for them. However, this claim contradicted with some historical realities of his reign.

Many travelers who visited Egypt at his time were much impressed with the high degree of religious tolerance which Egypt enjoyed. Gadsby for example put emphasis on the notable state of accommodation to all religions in Egypt. He admirably wrote: "All religions are now tolerated in Egypt."¹²⁹ As a result a number of churches and a cathedral were built in Alexandria under Abbas reign.¹³⁰

As a sign of good will, Abbas also sent a gift of marble to the pope in Rome for the renovations that were carried out there.¹³¹ Besides, he used to receive the Patriarch of the Copts on regular basis¹³² and was a big support for him.

On the other hand, some sources spoke of Abbas' collision with some Copts that led to dismissing them from his service because of his fanaticism. However, this incident in particular was seemingly misinterpreted.

In fact, Abbas had fired a huge number of officials when he came to power. He fired some of them because of their inefficiency while fired others to reduce governmental expenses. The Copts were no exception. In other words, he fired those officials regardless of their religion. He was looking for the best calibers no matter their religion or their origin. As such, he regarded this measure a purely corrective one that had nothing to do with religious prejudice or fanaticism. On the other hand, Abbas employed many Christians whom he believed efficient and highly qualified like Nubar, Arkail, Hekekyan, Ayrton and others. Undoubtedly, if he was prejudiced against non-muslims in entirety, he wouldn't have allowed them to key leading posts and heavily depended on them.

Nevertheless, he did collide with some Copts because of the complaint he received from the Abyssinian Sultan pertaining to some Coptic traders who sold free born children of Abyssinia to slavery.¹³³ Needless to say that Abbas wasn't that sort of rulers who could submit to the fait accompli or turn a blind eye to such outspoken violation of the law which he was supposed to enforce. From a ruler's perspective, such violation implied contempt to the authority of state which he represented and an underlying offense to him. No wonder, tension erupted between both sides and thus constituted probably the ground basis of such a claim.

Suspicion:-

It is generally accepted that Abbas was a very suspicious person that he even suspected his family relatives and his close immediate circle.

However, and to do Abbas justice, all his family members shared him this tendency as if it was a family tradition. It seems safe to say that such tendency was the inevitable result of the turbulent milieu where they all lived.

The British consul in Egypt at that time Walne stressed this point: "*he was suspicious as indeed are all his family*"¹³⁴

One must take into consideration that his grandfather Muhammad Ali was suspicious likewise. Whenever his mamluk served him a cup of coffee or a glass of water, he would refuse to drink it claiming that it was unclean. So his mamluk would swear to him that it was clean. Only then, he could drink it. This became a common practice that his mamluk became used to it. Besides, Muhammad Ali was always girdled with his sword while having his guard standing next to him for any emergency. He never gave away such cautiousness even in his last days when he suffered mental disorder.¹³⁵

In the same vein, Ibrahim pasha suspected the intensions of his father towards him. He was afraid that if his father recovered of his mental illness one day, he would execute him. Therefore, he rejected the idea of a regency council and insisted on his investiture as a viceroy instead. Thus, he travelled all the way to Istanbul to ask for the viceroyalty and didn't trust any of his followers to accomplish this mission.¹³⁶

Also, in the course of one of his trips, Ibrahim suspected the loyalty of his men too. He threatened to cut their heads before their arrival in Alexandria and to throw them to the sea. To evade this fate, Nubar made a lot of efforts to have him change his mind.¹³⁷

Apparently, the recurrent plots which Abbas was subject to must have aroused his suspicions. His uncle Said for example conspired against him with the Bedouins of *Awlad Ali* and paid huge sums of money to guarantee their loyalty. However, Abbas and by mere coincidence made a narrow escape of assassination.¹³⁸

That's to say he had some right in some of his fears and suspicions as Walne affirmed "*his constant fear and - as the event showed was a just one-was assassination.*"¹³⁹

Therefore, Abbas grew very alert and developed his own espionage system to protect himself. Hekekyan while in office mistakenly arrested some of those couriers who used to bring him secret information while their entering Egypt surreptitiously through the desert.¹⁴⁰

One must not forget that Abbas was eventually assassinated most probably at the hands of his family. Many sources spoke of his aunt Nazli's indulgence in his murder.¹⁴¹ Some British travelers who visited Egypt in the second half of the 19th century like William Gregory referred to a piece of gossip that was commonly heard in Egypt after Abbas' death that also pointed accusation fingers to his uncle Said who succeeded him. People believed that Said was at least aware of the plot.¹⁴² This assumption sounded very likely since Said made nothing to punish the criminals or even to detect them. That's how, they went freely with it. Besides, heavy pressures were exerted on the surgeons who inspected Abbas corpse and were ordered to forge their report and to write that it was a natural death rather than murder.¹⁴³ The surgeons at last wrote that he died of apoplexy.¹⁴⁴ By this way, Said closed shutters on the horrible murder and let it go. This provides another proof that Abbas suspicions didn't seem out of void but he had reasonable justification for them.

Seclusion:

It is generally agreed among historians that Abbas led a secluded lifestyle and preferred isolation. "*..... but it is true that Abbas used to shut himself up in his palace and to see as few people as possible*"¹⁴⁵

The narrative of an old peasant who lived under Abbas reign reflected Abbas' salient tendency to seclusion. He assured Wallace that he never saw him even once in a life and that he believed that no one else had ever seen him except his personal attendant.¹⁴⁶ However, there seems to be some exaggeration in this narrative.

The nagging question which one might raise here why Abbas did voluntary impose solitude and seclusion on himself.

It is less likely that he wished to distance himself or remain aloof from his subjects because he used to inspect their conditions by himself and spend part of the year wandering among the delta villages to meet the peasants and listen to their grievances.¹⁴⁷

This leaves little doubt that it was a maneuver to which he resorted to save himself embarrassment with the European powers. In other words, it was meant to evade Europeans whom he didn't much trust and to minimize every possible contact with them in an implicit way: "*he took refuge in flight.... visible only to a few of the consul-general-*"¹⁴⁸

Besides, he chose to reside in remote places that were hard to reach. No doubt, the far distance and the difficulty of transportation at that time must have caused inconvenience for Europeans and discouraged them to wait upon Abbas palace at any time as they used to do at the beginning of his reign.

This was probably one of the reasons that motivated him to move to "Abbasiyya".

One must also take into consideration that Abbas, according to some of his contemporaries like Clot bey and Soliman pasha, was born in Jeddah¹⁴⁹ where he spent his early formative years. It is very likely that he was much influenced with the natural environment there that's why he found his pleasure in residing in the desert areas:

*"il se plaisait dans le désert, au milieu des nomades, Arabes et Bédouins, dont il partageait volontiers la vie pénible, les courses vagabondes, les chasses, les guerres, les périls et les travaux."*¹⁵⁰ It is not surprising that he decided to construct a new suburb which he wished to be a military city¹⁵¹ at the heart of the desert and it would later carry his name.

At the same time, Abbas had seemingly preferred the fresh air of the desert and regarded healthier than that of the cities. Accordingly, his decision to construct *Abbassiyyah* through expanding at *Haswa* desert was meant to serve public health and render it a big favor.¹⁵² Travelers who visited *Abbassiyya* confirmed that it was the healthiest place as a residence due to its pure air.¹⁵³

Others believed that he moved there at his physicians' advice and for purely medical reason rather than a personal preference:

*"..... the pasha has a good palace, to which he resorts occasionally, - by order of his doctors."*¹⁵⁴

In addition to *Abbassiyya*, Abbas built another palace at the heart of the desert at the road between Cairo and Suez which he named "*Al-Dar al-Baydaa*" or the white abode.¹⁵⁵ He had probably built it for the sake of one

of his wives who originally came from Najd and who might have grown homesick for living away from her first environment.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, he built another palace in Sinai and paved the whole way to it. It was known as "*Qasr Al-Pasha*" or the Pasha's palace.¹⁵⁷

Ignorance and hatred to civilization:

Many historical sources sharply castigated Abbas because of his ignorance. Hekekyan for example stressed that Abbas didn't receive good education which formed his major handicap.¹⁵⁸

However, the good education which he lacked from their point of view was the European education: "*Abbas Pacha, the grandson of Mehemet Ali, has long been known for his hatred to anything having the resemblance of a Frank, and this is little to be wondered at, considering the education he has received.*"¹⁵⁹

Accordingly, they believed that his other family members superseded him because they all received such education which he missed: "*Il n'avait point reçu l'éducation européenne qu'on avait donnée aux autres fils du vice-roi*".¹⁶⁰

Believing in the superiority of European education, these sources branded Abbas and regarded him not well-educated like his successors. On the contrary, Abbas wasn't obsessed with Western culture like his successors because he received a traditional oriental learning. According to Artin bey he mastered both Arabic and Turkish¹⁶¹ and used to attend classes at Al Azhar University mosque.¹⁶² However, the difference in the kind of education he received doesn't make him ignorant as these sources propagated.

Besides, Abbas was keen to provide his son Ilhamy with the best education available that combined European and oriental ones to get the benefits of both. Therefore, he hired Ayrton bey to teach him English¹⁶³ while at the same time raised him according to Islamic traditions and culture and was keen to encourage him perform the five prayers¹⁶⁴. By this way, he would acquire modern learning but without losing his own indigenous identity. Such a vision which he possessed challenges that wide-held claim of his being an ignorant man. In the same vein, Abbas ordered gathering homeless children from the streets and enrolling them in schools¹⁶⁵ so as to up bring them properly. It is quite evident that he wanted to save those children from the ill-fate that awaited them in the streets. He also wanted to save the entire society from their deviancy and evils if they were to be left in the streets. Abbas determination to reform those kids reflected his far sight and his intelligence that assure that he wasn't that ignorant man whom they recurrently attacked.

One of the examples that were usually given to support the above mentioned claim was his intension to use the blocks of the pyramids in the construction of the Nile barrage. To overcome the shortage which the government suffered in providing the needs for completing the Nile barrage, Abbas considered using some of the blocks of the Pyramids for this purpose. However, this idea wasn't originally the brainchild of Abbas. It was Muhammad Ali who first considered pulling down the pyramid for the construction of the Nile barrage. Yet, he abandoned it at the advice of his French engineers who preferred the use of quarries instead because of its cheaper costs.¹⁶⁶

Besides, the re-use of stones stripped from adjacent ancient monuments was a commonplace at that time. The great pyramid itself was long used as a quarry since Mamluk period. Blocks of it for example were used in building Sultan Hassan mosque.¹⁶⁷ Abbas himself had stripped part of the marble of the citadel¹⁶⁸ and a number of alabaster columns from his grandfather mosque on another occasion.¹⁶⁹

Being a pragmatic man like his grandfather, Abbas didn't mind use such stones to provide the materials required for construction and solve the problem which he came to face. Clearly, he didn't know the value of those pyramids then. The French engineer whom he charged with studying and executing this idea wasn't honest with him. He neither discussed the idea with him nor explicitly objected to it. In contrast, he instead of explaining to him the unequalled value of the pyramids as a long-standing treasure to have him desert this idea, tried to deceive him saying that its costs were remarkably high which made this proposal non-applicable.¹⁷⁰

That's to say, the French engineer had deliberately concealed the truth and didn't bother himself to enlighten Abbas so as to keep him always backward. Such an attitude shows that Abbas was somehow right in dismissing a huge number of Europeans hired by the government since they proved unworthy of his trust.

On the other hand, when Abbas realized the immense value of such antiquities- probably after his meeting with Lepsius-, he learnt to highly appreciate them. He even gave his orders to well-preserve

them.¹⁷¹ Moreover, he ordered the conduction of excavations at the temple of Luxor in search of antiquities in 1852.¹⁷²

In the same vein, his decision of closing many schools and factories was interpreted as an attack against civilization. He was even accused of hating civilization as previously discussed.¹⁷³ In fact, almost all sources mentioned his decision of closing many schools and factories but none of them went any further beyond.

To one's surprise, Abbas' decision of closing factories had its roots in the last years of Muhammad Ali's reign. Muhammad Ali realized that the factories which he strove to build in Egypt had turned to be a heavy burden that exhausted his economy and dripped the country's resources. Therefore, he closed most of these factories and dismissed its workers:

*"The Pacha has begun to find out that the cotton and cloth manufactories are far from profitable, and many of these establishments were shut up, and the workmen discharged."*¹⁷⁴

For the very same reason, Abbas closed many factories because of its extremely high costs¹⁷⁵ which the country's budget couldn't afford. To Abbas credit, he instead of discharging the workers, he appointed them in the army to earn their living.¹⁷⁶

Things were to worsen with the inability of local products to compete with foreign products. Nubar pasha also put much emphasis on the poor quality of the products.¹⁷⁷

In other words, the perpetuation of these factories would have caused continuous financial losses. No wonder, the Times hailed his decision and considered it a good procedure taken to improve the country's welfare:

*"... le Times fit-il chorus avec les marchands de la Cité en louant le bris des machines, la dispersion et la déroutantes ingénieurs et des mécaniciens. « On prétend qu'Abbas, dit-il, en voyant l'infirmité des filatures de l'Égypte et les énormes dépenses qu'elles causent, sans profit, a résolu de les détruire, ce qui serait une bonne mesure pour la prospérité de ce pays. "*¹⁷⁸

On the other side, he established sugar refineries at Minya as well as a number of factories that fitted the actual needs of the country like a factory of ammunition, a factory of ice¹⁷⁹ and a factory at Kafr Al Zayat¹⁸⁰. This proves that he was a pragmatic man in the first place as mentioned before. As such, his decision had nothing to do with hatred for civilization but was primarily concerned with reducing the governmental expenses to avoid financial crisis.

Although, many high officials like Soliman pasha lamented this measure of closing factories, they confessed that this measure had its bright side too. They realized that the advent of progress was both a bane and a boon at the same time. Apparently, they developed a deep-seated conviction that if such industrialization approach adopted by Muhammad Ali had continued, this would have been catastrophic for the popular masses who paid its heavy toll: *"Si le progrès, si la civilisation allaient reculer, peut-être le peuple égyptien, accablé de charges pesantes, allait-il respirer. C'était une question qui allait se débattre et se vider avant peu, entre les Européens qui couvraient l'Égypte et les pauvres fellahs que Dieu semblait avoir pris en pitié."*¹⁸¹

As for closing some schools, this decision came at the heels of a diagnostic test which Abbas ordered to determine the educational level of the enrolled students. Unfortunately, the results were disappointing which outraged Abbas and spurred him to take corrective actions. No wonder, he sent his orders to the head of council of Public Instruction to discharge the defaulters among the enrolled students and replace them with others who had a genuine interest in learning.¹⁸² In other words, when Abbas took this measure he wasn't waging a war on public instruction; rather he was carrying out a radical reform even if it caused a temporary fall in the numbers of the enrolled students. It comes as a little surprise that one of his contemporaries described this measure as: *"réforme vraiment grande et utile, vraiment libérale et honnête...."*¹⁸³

He also carried out a similar exam for the engineers hired by the government and entrusted Ali Mubarak with this task and again the results were disastrous. Accordingly, he discharged 15 of them from their office.¹⁸⁴ In the same manner, he closed the veterinary school as a result of the failure of its staff to treat his horses.¹⁸⁵

That's to say such decisions didn't seem out of void but they had their justification.

Indeed, closing the school wasn't the right solution in such a case, yet Abbas believed that any institution who had no real outcome was a mere waste of money and effort and a luxury which the state budget couldn't afford.

It should be noted here, that he didn't close all schools as mistakenly thought as many schools continued to exist such as that of medicine at Al-Qasr Al-Aini hospital¹⁸⁶ as well as that of midwifery. He also continued

to hire its graduates like Amenah bint Muhammad whom he employed at Rosetta with a salary of about 250 Piasters.¹⁸⁷

New European schools were also established in Egypt under his reign like that of the American missionaries at Azbakkeiyya and that of the Fre`res at Musky¹⁸⁸

On the other end of the spectrum, he was keen to open a school at Khartoum that lacked good schools that's why he entrusted some prominent figures whom he tested for their efficiency like Rifaah Al Tahtawy. His decision of entrusting Tahtawy with this mission was always misinterpreted as a way of punishing Tahtawy who fell out of favor. However, Abbas was seemingly concerned with spreading education in the Sudan therefore he had to depend on efficient men to perform this task. He even sent a letter to the general governor of the Sudan reproaching him because the opening of the aforementioned school was belated and took a longer time than what he expected.¹⁸⁹

According to the Egyptian archives, Prince Omar Toussoun revealed that Abbas did send educational missions to Europe in contrast to what is commonly said that he stopped sending such missions. To one's surprise, Abbas sent six educational missions to Europe during his reign. He sent at least 41 students in these missions (the number is controversial as AbdAllah Al Nadim suggested that they were 48 students however Toussoun couldn't verify this number since the number mentioned in official records was 29 while another twelve students were mentioned in a contemporary report presented to Said Pasha that make their total 41 only.)¹⁹⁰

The details of the first four of these six missions were found in the government records preserved at *Dar Al Mahfozat*, while the news of the last two missions were found in a handwritten book that was dedicated by the director of these missions to Said pasha. Prince Omar Toussoun while examining the personal belongings of his grandfather Said Pasha came accidentally across this book which he unveiled its contents. It was much more like a report that comprised the names and pictures of all the students of these two missions and their specialization except for one missing picture of one of those students.¹⁹¹

These missions were sent to Austria, England, France, Italy, and Germany respectively. Students were required to study medicine, Mechanics, astronomy, military arts and pharmacy.¹⁹² Furthermore, Abbas spent a huge sum of money on these missions (82,923 Pounds according to Abd Allah Al Nadim estimation.)¹⁹³

More importantly, Abbas fiercely fought superstition in Egypt. He exiled all magicians, soothsayers and fortune tellers to Sudan. According to Nubar, the streets of Cairo and Alexandria were crowded with such people who used to tell their prophecies to the passersby due to the wide spread of superstition among all classes. Some of them even lived under the auspices of high officials and statesmen who secretly consulted them in their huts. Although Abbas was sometimes inclined to believe their prophecies, yet he never surrendered himself to them or publicly recognized or blessed them.¹⁹⁴

On the contrary, he relentlessly fought this inclination in himself and took a firm stand against all forms of occult. This proves that he was neither ignorant nor irrational as mistakenly believed. In sum, stigmatizing Abbas with ignorance seems to be inaccurate and a rather prejudiced charge.

Homosexuality

To add more spices to the already blackened image of Abbas, he was accused of homosexuality. In order to preserve public morality, Abbas was bent on combating prostitution. As a result, he closed all brothels and sternly chased prostitutes till he drove them out of Cairo: "*we have not yet seen any dancing girls; they are all in exile in Upper Egypt. Good brothels no longer exist in Cairo either*"¹⁹⁵.

Nevertheless, Abbas' decision of deporting the dancing girls to the city of Esna¹⁹⁶ and his determination to uproot prostitution from Cairo was obviously misinterpreted and twisted. It was said that he did so because he was less interested in women and preferred men only.¹⁹⁷ This underlying accusation was probably meant to provoke the resentment of the populace when hear such thing about Abbas and cause him a great loss of face. Thus Abbas reputation would be contaminated ever after and eventually he would lose people's respect.

Self-absorption in pleasures.-

Abbas was always depicted as an individually-oriented ruler who was fully occupied in his passing pleasures. Such accounts had repeatedly referred to Abbas fondness of horses and palace building.

In fact Abbas had greatly admired Arabian horses. He used to offer high prices for the Bedouins to buy their mares because of its good stock.¹⁹⁸ He even bred nearly 1000 horses in his stables.¹⁹⁹ No wonder, the queen of England received a proposal from the consuls in Egypt to make Abbas a gift of thorough-bred horses²⁰⁰ so as to improve the relations with him. Abbas had dared challenge the London Jockey club²⁰¹ to prove the superiority of his horses.

In addition, Abbas had largely benefited from his friendship with Prince Faisal son of Turkey in this regard. It seems that Abbas cultivated a friendship with Faisal during imprisonment in Cairo's citadel and most probably had facilitated his escape and return to Arabia. Feeling indebted to Abbas, Faisal had gifted Abbas 85 well-bred horses. Furthermore, he guided and assisted Abbas' emissaries headed by the overseer of his stables whom he sent to Nejd in search for fine horses in the Arabian Desert. Those emissaries were also assigned to tracing the history of such horses and gathering all available information about their strains from Arabian tribes there.²⁰² Apparently, Abbas fondness of horses had its origin in his early upbringing where he was trained on horsemanship and other arts of war. He also participated in the Syrian war in spite of his young age.²⁰³ It comes as a little surprise that he highly valued horses and regarded them as a major source of power. He was also fond of pigeons²⁰⁴ and he built square towers for them near his palace.²⁰⁵ Obviously, watching such peaceful creatures used to give him serenity and relief which he was longing for as well as help him to retreat from his endless conflicts with his foes.

As for palace building, Abbas constructed a number of palaces at various parts of Egypt. Therefore, many historical sources spotted light on his obsession with palace building that costed a lot of money and necessitated imposing forced labor for their completion. This is clearly manifested in an incident that appeared in Hekekyan's account of Abbas reign. Hekekyan once asked a donkey driver about his view of the pasha. The poor man lamented that the pasha led his people to die while building his palaces and it would have been better to direct such huge sums of money used in their construction to improve the country's conditions.²⁰⁶

On the other hand, some believed that this obsession amounted to mania²⁰⁷, while others like Dr. Walne the British consul in Egypt believed that he built these palaces at the urge of a childish whim by which he amused himself: "*he carried on with the recklessness and caprice of a child as if he was building and pulling down and rebuilding by means of slaves of the lamp.*"²⁰⁸

However, it is less likely that he built such palaces just for personal amusement only. Some believe that these palaces were meant to symbolize his dynastic grandeur since he was pretty concerned with maintaining such a dynastic order.²⁰⁹

Besides, one can easily discern his endeavor to use these palaces to mirror his massive power as a sovereign. By this way, he could impress his opponents and remarkably elevate his status in their eyes. In other words, it was part of his plan to consolidate his rule in Egypt.

Facts versus myths

In spite of all the conflicting accounts regarding the reign of Abbas I, almost all sources agree that he was an efficient ruler who used to run the country with much competence. To build his own administrative capacity, Abbas was reportedly preoccupied with state's affairs since his grandfather's reign. As mentioned before, he was **trained** to lead armies in the course of the Syrian war next to his uncle Ibrahim pasha and to administer the state through his engagement in a number of governmental departments to fully explore the administrative system.

To Abbas credit, Nubar pasha who was his private secretary and interpreter and knowing him well, described him as a "*Grand Seigneur*".²¹⁰ Such a portrayal had its value-laden implication. It indicates his moral commitment towards his subjects. Acting as a grand seigneur, Abbas was keen to dispense justice among his subjects. Therefore, he used to tour Egypt to examine its conditions at close range on his own rather than depending on official reports only.²¹¹ He wandered in the delta every year on horseback to inspect

people's conditions by himself. Whenever he passed by the poor villages, he would stop and erect a booth there where he would receive the grievances of the poor and examine them. He did the same thing in Cairo and Alexandria. It is worth mentioning that the peasants felt free to present their petitions to him by themselves and to wait for his reply.²¹² This deconstructed the claims that he was seldom seen by his people and that he was a fearful figure whose name when mentioned brought horror to them as they used to communicate together unreservedly.

In the same vein, Abbas had partly restored some of their dignity and their rights and was eager to reduce their burdens. He confiscated the lands that were given as grants for the high officials during the reign of his grandfather and re-distributed them among the peasants. It amounted to nearly 1/7 of the cultivated area in Egypt at that time.²¹³ That's how he liberated the peasants from their bondage to those grandees who had abused their authority:

*"he abolished the so-called oghdes—an institution of Mehemet Ali's, by which an influential favourite received one or more villages with power to treat the inhabitants almost as serfs, on condition of his paying the current taxes and the arrears...."*²¹⁴

Needless to say that in doing so, Abbas harmed the financial interests of those high officials who had turned to be large landlords and nurtured their hostility ever after.

In the same manner, he abolished the "Ferda" tax that had long overloaded Egyptians. This tax was first imposed by Muhammad Ali on all men, women and children alike there by making it an exceedingly notorious tax.²¹⁵ Although, people had always complained about it, it continued uninterrupted till Abbas reign.

Other illicit taxes were abolished likewise such as "*al-Taqaseet al-Diwaniah*" to ease the burden of the down trodden peasants.²¹⁶ Similarly, he reduced the amount of taxes in Damietta as well as the high tolls imposed on the transfer of goods.²¹⁷

Besides, he abolished state monopoly²¹⁸ that long over shouldered peasants who were deprived of the sweet fruit of their labor: *"...considering it inconsistent with the dignity of a grand seigneur to act the part of a wholesale corn merchant, he abolished what remained of the Government monopolies, which secured for the Viceregal Exchequer the lion's share of the profits derived from the exportation of agricultural produce."*²¹⁹

To facilitate payment, he allowed peasants to pay taxes in kind²²⁰. In other words, he made it easier for peasants to pay the due taxes in the way they preferred.²²¹ More importantly, the whip was no longer in use during the collection of taxes under his reign: *"If we bear all these things in mind we shall have no difficulty in believing what old Abdu told us, that in the reign of Abbas the kurbash was! very little used in the collection of the taxes"*²²²

He also allowed peasants in Munofiyya province to sell their harvest in the way they preferred without the least interference from the government.²²³ That's how he gave a free hand to peasants regarding selling their crops.

At the same time, he tried to lessen the immense magnitude of forced labor during his time: *"Even the burden of the corvee was considerably diminished in his time, for he did not I consider it necessary to continue on a grand scale the canalisation scheme which Mehemet Ali had begun."*²²⁴

Significantly, he also reduced much of their pains through prohibiting the employment of pregnant women, elders over seventy, nursing women, children under eight, disabled persons and patients in this scheme in 1851.²²⁵

All such transformations had led eventually to the relaxation of the state's grip on peasants.²²⁶

Introducing a new and more-organized means for conscription depending mainly on geographical division was another development that took place during Abbas reign. He divided the country into regions and determined the number of recruits that were to be drawn from each region. Unlike the old means that were sporadic, haphazard and on the spot, this new development must have enabled him to maintain justice all over the country:

*"In old times, when soldiers were wanted, men were pounced upon suddenly wherever they could be found, and marched off, leaving great grief behind; but before any dangerous excitement could be got up. This was justly considered a barbarous and inartificial method; and when, for what purposes remains a mystery, a certain levy of men was required, it was determined to proceed with regularity, and to make each district furnish its quota according to the number of inhabitants."*²²⁷

It seems safe to say that Abbas had worked in favor of the poor peasants who were subjected to a lot of injustices which made of him: *"a much better master to the peasantry than his predecessors or his two immediate successors....."*²²⁸

This proved consistent with the testimony of an old peasant named Abdu who eye witnessed Abbas reign: *"Yet, according to old Abdu, the reign of Abbas (1849-54) was a happy time for the fellaheen..... There was no longer the hard, disagreeable work on the plantations of the Pasha or of the Beys, and few new canals were dug, so that the corvee was confined to keeping the existing canals clean. The conscription, too, was very much lighter, for there were no foreign wars like the campaigns of the Hedjas, the Morea, and Syria, and only a small number of men were called out for ordinary home service. As for taxes, they were not very heavy, and could generally be paid without much effort....."*²²⁹

To his credit, Abbas also directed his attention to preserve stability and keep order.

He also managed to keep outlaws and criminals in check. No wonder, safety and security spread throughout Egypt under his reign. To one's surprise, granaries were left unattended without guards as no one dared break into them.²³⁰

The biting tone and the decisive language with which Abbas wrote his orders to the director of Gharbiyya province reflected his strictness in this regard. He firmly instructed him to maintain security, uproot wretches, and arrest thieves who used to terrify people and steal their animals, their barns and haymows and harshly punish them.²³¹

Safety of trade routes in Egypt had always impressed foreigners. The British consul in Egypt at that time spoke highly up Abbas' capability to undertake such a responsibility.²³² It comes as a little surprise that Nubar pasha confirmed that Abbas' reign was the safest time in Egypt where people enjoyed both security and stability.²³³

Regardless of the foregoing view of Abbas that usually portrayed him as heartless and utterly indifferent to his own subjects, there were many occasions when he proved to be thoughtful of his people and much concerned about their comfort.

The eruption of the Crimean war had left a negative impact on Egypt. Unfortunately, it coincided with a high rise in the annual inundation that badly affected the local agriculture. Without waste of time, Abbas gave his orders to prohibit the export of wheat lest it should cause a scarcity in Egypt causing starvation..²³⁴

On another occasion, he gave his orders to his officials to make all necessary arrangements for facilitating the import of cattle prior to Bairm to enable the poor buy meat at affordable price.²³⁵ For the very same reason, he took strict measures to stop the high rise in the value of the Egyptian pound that exhausted the masses.²³⁶

Similarly, he gave his instructions to the head of war department to improve the quality of bread served to soldiers and to provide all means of comfort for the troops.²³⁷

On the other hand, he addressed many neglected problems. For instance, he made tremendous efforts to improve public health through launching vaccination campaign against small pox that threatened Egypt then.²³⁸ Besides, the majority of the students whom he sent to Europe in educational missions were ordered to study medicine²³⁹ which reflected Abbas great concern for improving public health in Egypt.

Realizing the cardinal importance of preventive medicine, he enforced a quarantine law to prevent the transfer of Cholera that broke out in Syria. This could be deduced from Hekekyan conversation with Senior when he was relating to him how he lost his job as the head of sanitary department and was put upon quarter-pay because of mistakenly arresting some of Abbas secret couriers and revealing their identities while enforcing quarantine measures.²⁴⁰

To support pregnant woman, Abbas decided that the Egyptian government would shoulder the expenses of their labor if they went to public hospitals as well as cover the costs of their accommodation there for a period ranging from 8 to 10 days.²⁴¹

It took him great pains to foster a strong economy. As a result, wages were regularly paid on time without arrears.²⁴² As a matter of fact, he used to run the treasury perfectly²⁴³ and didn't raise loans.²⁴⁴ Therefore, he

was hailed for this particular point: "*But Abbas, as a ruler, was to a certain extent a success. He so managed the finances of Egypt as to keep clear of debt.*"²⁴⁵

In short, he didn't suffer any financial crisis like his successors. On the contrary, he left a large *sum of money in the Treasury*.²⁴⁶ Thanks to his well-regulated administration, there was no deficit whatsoever in the state's budget.²⁴⁷

Moreover, Abbas was bent to fight corruption and exploitation in all its forms. As a result, he fired a number of high officials who were either inefficient or dishonest. For instance, he fired Rostum pasha the director of the middle provinces.²⁴⁸

He also tightened the noose around Artin bey when found out that he yielded to embezzlement to fatten his coffers; that's why he headed to Istanbul and joined the run outs party there.²⁴⁹ He also carried out an investigation to detect those who caused the drowning of a steamer and punish them.²⁵⁰

His continuous search for best calibers, spurred him to examine students of both the medical school and engineering school to make sure of their capacity. However, their results were disappointing:

*"On his accession, he had the original idea of a general examination of teachers and pupils, in his presence at Abou-Zabel; the result was disastrous for both masters and boys, and Abbas decreed the immediate closing of all schools."*²⁵¹

In the same manner, he examined the engineers working for the government to make sure of their efficiency and entrusted Ali Mubarak with this mission.²⁵²

He selected the best candidates to join the school which he founded likewise.²⁵³ He even called it "*Al Mafrouzah*" which means the school which its students were carefully selected

That's to say, he employed carrot- and- stick policy and developed a balance and check system to enhance the performance of his functionaries and held them in lashes at the same time.²⁵⁴

No wonder, he promoted Ali Mubarak who demonstrated much efficiency and enthusiasm and rewarded him for his tremendous efforts especially after reducing some of the unnecessary expenses from the state budget allocated for public instruction.²⁵⁵

At the same time, he continued to preach his officials carry out the tasks charged with without waste of time²⁵⁶ while rebuked those who caused the delay of work like the commander of the Sudan for the delay in opening a school in Khurtum.²⁵⁷

He also monitored the performance of the British engineers working in the construction of the railway²⁵⁸ to make sure of their full dedication to complete their work. In addition, he developed follow up measures to guarantee the performance of all tasks on time.

On examining the contract²⁵⁹ signed on behalf of Abbas with Robert Stevenson, one can easily discern Abbas' alertness, accuracy and determination to perfectly accomplish the project.

It was a very well-articulated and rather fair contract that specified the rights and commitments of each party. It maintained a striking equilibrium between the interests of both countries. In other words, it didn't favor British interests more than Egyptian ones unlike that of the Suez Canal concession that was tailored to serve foreign interests and badly injured Egyptian ones.

More significantly, it determined a framework of the project to be carried out perfectly and drew a timeline of three years to make sure that the project will be completed on time. Any delay after those three years caused by carelessness from Stevenson's side, they will shoulder all expenses till its completion. (Article 18)

Stevenson himself had to inspect and check all equipments needed before its shipment to Egypt to make sure they meet technical needs and specifications). (Article 4)

It was quite clear that Abbas was extremely meticulous. He paid much attention to every single detail and left nothing for coincidence.

Besides, he managed to improve the living conditions for the average people. This was best manifested in the abundance of food during his reign. The cultivation of new lands was another asset to be added to his reign likewise.²⁶⁰

Among his big contributions likewise was paving the Cairo Suez route for the transit trade.²⁶¹ He spent a big fortune nearly 70, 000 Pounds on this project.²⁶² This was definitely a big favor which Abbas rendered to international trade then.

He also undertook a massive project for distributing water to Cairene inhabitants²⁶³ through using levers to raise water and extending pipelines.²⁶⁴ That's how he could facilitate for the people getting their daily needs of water. Such attempts to extend pipelines for people's comfort²⁶⁵ furnish ample proof that he considered his subjects needs and tried earnestly to meet them. Special attention was given likewise to Alexandria that notably thrived under his reign²⁶⁶

One can safely say that all these indicators affirm Abbas' good management and notable administrative skills that contributed to the prosperity which Egypt experienced at his hands. It was quite clear that he was able to build up an adept administrative machine in Egypt and to considerably improve the living conditions of the poverty-stricken masses.

Conclusion

Abbas Hilmi I had proved to be a controversial figure as diverse views of his legacy and his reign co-exist. with disturbs the conventional narrative of Abbas reign. As previously mentioned, Abbas enjoyed a very bad reputation as a ruler while innumerable horrible stories are habitually associated with him.

To his chagrin, Western Historians (namely French) had sharply attacked Abbas Hilmi I and targeted his reputation putting much emphasis on his eccentric character and his inconsistent policies as they claimed. That's how they made of him a dreadful monster bound by no moral chains. It seems that Abbas' prime fault from their point of view was his fierce opposition to the unbridled growth of Western influence in Egypt which didn't appeal to them. Certainly, Abbas was not a saint. He had committed a number of wrongs like all historical figures, yet his faults were largely manipulated and far exaggerated to vigorously shaken his position in Egypt. When failed to stop this war, ceased his trials to defend himself or to clear things out Abbas diverted his energy to bring prosperity to Egypt. In response to the developing needs of the situation, Abbas exploited the growing weight of British interests in Egypt to safe-guard his position. The railway concession which he granted Britain was the last nail in his coffin. This move had obviously infuriated all of them (The French, the Porte, the courtiers in Istanbul and the family who were by and large pro-French). This war had supposedly come to an end with Abbas murder. Nevertheless, it continued after his death . History. That's how, those historians were given a green light to resume war on Abbas memory which eventually worked out with much success.

To one's surprise, native historians were much influenced with the accounts of their Western counterparts without bothering themselves to verify. As time lapsed, the gloomy image of Abbas Hilmi I that was both produced and promoted at the mid-19th century remained unchallenged to the present. After investigating these sources one can vividly see a lot of contradictions in them.

عباس باشا: حاكم غريب الأطوار

يسعى هذا البحث لتسليط أضواء جديدة على فترة حكم الوالي عباس حلمي الأول و التي امتدت ما بين عامي 1848 و 1854 . تميزت تلك الفترة بثورات أحداثها وغموضها في ذات الوقت. لذا، يمثل هذا البحث محاولة لسبر أغوار تلك الفترة التاريخية وإزالة ذلك الغموض الذي يكتنفها عن طريق إعادة قراءة تاريخ عباس باشا بهدف الوصول إلى تقييم متوازن وغير منحاز لفترة حكمه. ويهدف البحث أيضاً إلى تغيير تلك النظرة السلبية الذائعة الصيت عن عباس حلمي الأول والتي دأب بعض المؤرخين الأجانب على الترويج لها حتى استقرت في الأذهان كأحد المسلّمات دون أن يتم تحييصها أو التحقق منها و ذلك من خلال تحليل بعض المصادر التاريخية التي ركزت على جانب بعينه من الصورة التاريخية، بينما أغفلت جوانب عديدة أخرى وتبنت وجهة نظر أحادية كرسّت لتلك النظرة السلبية الشائعة وذلك لتحري مدي دقة و مصداقية هذه المصادر وصلاحيتها للبناء عليها من عدمه.

علاوة على ذلك، يكشف هذا البحث النقاب عن بعض المصادر التاريخية الأخرى والتي تم تجاهلها و لم يُلتفت إليها على الرغم من أنها تمثل المفتاح الرئيسي لفهم فترة حكم عباس حلمي الأول وتفسير أحداثها بموضوعية و بمنأى عن الفكرة النمطية السائدة و التي إعتادت غض الطرف عن إنجازات عباس الأول و عمدت إلى تصويره بصورة شديدة القتامة. كما يلقي البحث المزيد من الضوء على الدور المحوري الذي يلعبه المؤرخون في تشكيل الذاكرة الجمعية الخاصة بأى أمة وفي صياغة وتضمين القوالب الجامدة التي تستحث عمليات التذكر الجماعي لبعض الفترات و الأحداث و الشخصيات التاريخية أحياناً أو عمليات الإغفال و التناسى الجماعي لغيرها في أحيانٍ أخرى.

Notes

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- ²Edwin De Leon, *The Khedive's Egypt; Or The Old House Of Bondage Under New Masters*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Seakle & Rivington, 1877), 88.
- ³Sir Charles Augustus Murray, *A Short Memoire Of Mohammed Ali Founder Of The Vice-Royalty Of Egypt*, (London: Bernard Quaritch 1898), v.
- ⁴"His Highness Abbas Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt", *Illustrated London News*, March 27, 1852.
- ⁵Murray, vi.
- ⁶Nassau William Senior, *Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Seakle & Rivington, 1882), 2: 170.
- ⁷Murray, v.
- ⁸Senior, 2:178; De Leon, 86.
- ⁹D.A. Cameron, *Egypt in the nineteenth century, or, Mehemet Ali and his successors until the British occupation in 1882*, (London: Smith, Elder, 1898), 155.
- ¹⁰"His Highness Abbas Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt", *Illustrated London News*, (March 27, 1852)
- ¹¹Amīn Sāmī, *Taqwīm al-Nīl*, (al-Qāhirah: Matba'at Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah bi-al-Qāhirah, 2002), 3: 5.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, 3:6.
- ¹³John Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*, (London: W. Clowes And Sons, 1840), 121.
- ¹⁴Clot bey, I: xxxix.
- ¹⁵Cameron, 227.
- ¹⁶Charles Rathbone Low, *The Indian Navy 1613-1863*, (London: Richard Bentley And Son, 1877), 2: 305; Murray, viii; Clot bey, 1:xxxix.
- ¹⁷FO 78/757, Correspondence from Consul Charles Augustus Murray, December 6, 1848.
- ¹⁸Aime Vingtrinier, *Soliman Pacha-Colonele Seve- Ou Histoire Des Guerres De L'Egypte DE 1820 A 1860*, (Paris: Libraire De Firmin Dipot, 1886), 550.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, 551, 552
- ²⁰Nubar pasha, *Mudhakkirāt Nubar pasha*, (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2009), 109.
- ²¹Cameron, 203.
- ²²A handwritten report on Abbas Pasha's waqf, 9 Ragab 1269H., B2168: The Boutros family's collection, Bib. Alex.
- ²³Vingtrinier, 551.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, 551.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 551.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, 552; Sami, 3:3.
- ²⁷Nubar, 120.
- ²⁸Bayle St. John, "Egypt under Abbas Pasha", *The International Magazine of Literature, Art and Science* 4, No. 2 (September 1851), 260.
- ²⁹FO 78/804, Correspondence from Consul-General Charles Augustus Murray, 19 Feb. 1849.
- ³⁰FO 78/804, Correspondence from Consul-General Charles Augustus Murray, April 6, 1849.
- ³¹*The Times*, 17 June 1850, 5.
- ³²FO 78/805, Correspondence from Consul-General Charles Augustus Murray, May 19, 1849.
- ³³FO 78/841, A confidential letter from the British Consul in Cairo Alfred S. Walne to Sir Charles Murray, September 20, 1850.
- ³⁴Cameron, 227, 228.
- ³⁵St. John, 260-262.
- ³⁶Nubar, 126-127.
- ³⁷Vingtrinier, 551.
- ³⁸*Ibid.*, 551.
- ³⁹Helen Anne B. Rivlin, "The Railway Question in the Ottoman-Egyptian Crisis of 1850-1852", *Middle East Journal* 15, No. 4 (Autumn, 1961), 367.
- ⁴⁰FO 78/841, A confidential letter from the British Consul in Cairo Alfred S. Walne to Sir Charles Murray, September 20, 1850.
- ⁴¹Nubar, 126.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, 126.
- ⁴³Dispatch by the French Consul in Egypt Benedetti to his government, May 18, 1849, in "Egypte, 1849-1850," Vol. 21, in Les archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris.
- ⁴⁴FO 78/841, A confidential letter from the British Consul in Cairo Alfred S. Walne to Sir Charles Murray, September 20, 1850.
- ⁴⁵FO 78/916, Correspondence from Consul General Murray, January 16, 1852.
- ⁴⁶FO 78/757, Correspondence from Consul General Murray, December 17, 1848.
- ⁴⁷FO 78/916, Correspondence from Consul General Murray, January 16, 1852.
- ⁴⁸FO 78/876, Correspondence from Consul General Murray, November 26, 1851.
- ⁴⁹FO 78/841, A confidential letter from the British Consul in Cairo Alfred S. Walne to Sir Charles Murray, September 20, 1850.
- ⁵⁰FO 352/33, To and from Consul General Murray dispatches and private Stratford Canning Papers November 14, 1850.
- ⁵¹Bayle St. John, 262.
- ⁵²Egypt, *The New York Times*, 3 October 1851.
- ⁵³FO 78/916, Correspondence from Consul General Murray, January 24, 1852.
- ⁵⁴Egypt, *The New York Times*, October 3 1851.
- ⁵⁵FO 78/816, Instructions from Palmerstone to Stratford Canning, October 21, 1850.

- ⁵⁶FO 142/16, Correspondence from Consul General Murray to Foreign Office and Constantinople, November 2, 1851.
- ⁵⁷FO 141/17, From Foreign Office: Instructions from Lord Palmerstone to Murray, August 23, 1851.
- ⁵⁸FO 141/18, From Constantinople: Correspondence from Sir Stratford Canning, October 29, 1851.
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