

According to this account the enemies of Robert Sherley, "in particular the Mullas", had an attempt made on his life before they had gone far on the road: a band fell on the caravan, and, after binding the arms of the servants, tied Sherley to a tree and tried to make him drink poison: at that moment a sword fell from the hands of one miscreant and Sherley's wife, like a true Amazon, bounded on it and proceeded to thrust and cut and kill some of the band, putting to flight the rest.

What is certain is that in Fr. John Thaddeus' own handwriting there exists<sup>1</sup> a "Memoria—list of Christians baptized in Persia by the Carmelite Fathers", the first name in which is "Doña Theresa, wife of Count Don Robert Sherley, day of the Purification 1608": no mention here of Sherley himself receiving conditional baptism, nor of his being received into the Church: and this would seem to confirm the other account, that he had already been recognized as, and was practising as a Catholic before the arrival of the Carmelites in December 1607, as also that she had become, if not been born, a Muslim, for as an "orthodox" schismatic there would have been no need of baptism. Sampsonia did in fact take the name of the Holy Reformer of the Carmelite Order. According to MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, the certificate of their marriage was recorded in the register later, on 27.9.1615.

The narrative, of unidentified authorship, in the Fondo Borghese cited above, proceeds as regards Sherley's journey across Europe:

"He went to Moscow and presented to the (Grand) Duke, to the Palatine father of the (Grand) Duchess, to the captain-general of the (Grand) Duke, tents and carpets and other articles from Persia. In exchange he had from the (Grand) Duke a fur cloak and a horse, from the Palatine a carriage for six horses: and with the latter he discussed a project for giving his (the Palatine's) daughter in marriage to the son of the Shah of Persia. From the captain-general he had a cap of sable-skin, and coat of Turkish brocade as worn in Poland. Together with 'Ali Quli Baig, at present in Rome as ambassador of the Shah, he had audience, as they had met in that country. They received a reply expressing friendship. They went on together to the king of Poland, where they had audience separately (were given a magnificent entertainment, 3 April, ? 1609) and received replies couched in general terms. The Englishman made a gift to the king of Poland of a piece of fine white cloth from India. He received from the king a gift of an ewer and basin of silver gilt. Together also they went to the Emperor. They had a joint audience and received a reply in general terms. The Englishman had some goods consigned to his charge by the king of Persia: from the Emperor he received as a gift a box with silver candlesticks valued at about 300 scudi, and *he was made a Count Palatine of the Empire*. The Persian received as a gift a vase of mother of pearl, an ewer and basin, and other silver articles worth 400 scudi." (Sherley was sent on with a passport on 1.7.1609: on the 20th July Robert paid off a great sum, a debt contracted by his brother Anthony, i.e. in 1600.)<sup>2</sup>

There is a discrepancy as to dates regarding the arrival and stay of Robert Sherley in Rome: in his *Hist. Miss.* Fr. Eusebius ab. Omn. Sanct., chap. XV, part I, book 2, under the year 1609, not only gives those dates in July regarding Sherley's stay at the Emperor's Court, but adds that in August Pope Paul V, to oblige the Shah, left no stone unturned to show regard for his ambassador, creating Robert Sherley a Count of the Apostolic Palace of the Lateran, knight of the "Aurata Milizia", chamberlain of honour (Brief signed 7th October). Writing more than two centuries later the author of *En Persia*, vol. III, p. 28, makes Sherley to have reached Rome about November 1608, to have then presented to the Pope the letters from Shah 'Abbas, and discussed questions at issue between the princes of Christendom and the Persian monarch, subsequently leaving for Savoy, France, Flanders and Spain, where he remained 14 months<sup>3</sup> and the Court supplied him, his wife and attendants with all needs

<sup>1</sup> O.C.D. 235.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Eusebius ab Omn. Sanct., chap. XV, part I, book 2.

<sup>3</sup> Quoting the *Comentarios* of Don Garcia Silva y Figueroa, II, p. 107.