

the coming twenty years, a man who assimilated well with the Orient and its languages, particularly Armenian, had petitioned through the Procurator of the missions in Rome for permission to say Mass in Armenian, all the other Fathers agreeing as to the value of such a concession. He proposed to say Mass sometimes in their churches at Julfa, seeing that the Armenians said only one daily: his idea was that by being present at, and getting accustomed to the Western rite, the schismatics would gradually drop the abuses in their own sacrifice and ceremonies, and a spiritual contact would thus be established. For—still at that period—he could report the attitude of the schismatic Armenians towards Latin Religious was one of cordiality and reverence: not only the common folk, but also the notables would ask for the blessing of the Carmelites and showed more respect for them than for their own Patriarch, often bringing their sick for the prayers of the missionaries to be said over them. Indeed it was the opinion of Fr. Dimas that, had the Carmelite Religious arrived earlier in the country and learnt the four languages facilitating communication, i.e. Armenian, Chaldaean, Georgian and Persian,

“the state of those subject races would not have become so desperate, nor would they have fallen a prey to the Muhammadan wolves—we have arrived too late to save many. . . .
“People come to ask for baptism, and there is no one to instruct them.”

So he too had begged Rome for more Religious.

After their invasion of Azarbaijan, 'Abbas I had made a truce with the Turks towards the end of 1618 and was back in Isfahan by June 1619,¹ when Fr. Dimas mentions that the undefined position in which the monarch had left their occupation of the premises he had put at their disposal and his changeable moods were still causing trouble to the Mission:

“As regards the vineyard . . . some days ago, when 'Ali Baig was here, the Shah had part of it ploughed up and part of it used . . . these games occur frequently and now we hope to know what his wish really is—he has never declared it to us, save that once he told Fr. John Thaddeus that he could buy premises, if that Religious so desired. He (the Shah) is at present in Isfahan and has shown himself very affable to Fr. John Thaddeus. . . .”

But by far the most striking event of 1619 was the arrival—at long last—in the capital of the special ambassador from king Philip III of Spain, Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa. Of this event and the proceedings of his mission, in addition to the *Comentarios* of Don Garcia himself (published by the Sociedad de Bibliófilos Espanoles, Madrid, 1903-5, 2 vols.),² the *Viaggi* of P. della Valle, and *En Persia* of Fr. Florencio, vol. III, pp. 106-13, and the historian of the Carmelites, Fr. Eusebius, furnish sufficient detail to give a fairly accurate impression.

When Don Garcia de Silva reached Hurmuz on 8.5.1617,³ the Shah, as can be verified from preceding extracts from letters, was at the front in Azarbaijan, where he remained until the end of 1618. Quoting an anonymous narrative in the Carmelite archives, *En Persia* relates:

“the winter” (i.e. of 1617-8) “the ambassador passed in a town called Shiraz, 130 leagues from Hurmuz—the Governor lodged him in a very sumptuous palace of his with a garden close to the town, and there provided the ambassador with all his requirements in a very liberal and handsome manner, entertaining him at many banquets. . . . Here he received an intimation from the Shah that in order to honour the envoy extraordinary that monarch had quitted the camp of his army at Sultanieh and was awaiting him at

¹ Letter of 27.6.1619, O.C.D. 237 b.

² This has not, however, been available for consultation by the compiler of the present work. The author of *En Persia* points to the use of them made in the *Bulletin of the Royal Academy of History*, Madrid, vol. 92, pp. 497-510, April-June 1928.

³ *Vide* No. 476 of catalogue of original correspondence, *List of Factory Records*, East India Company, at India Office.