

seems indicated by a reference in a letter¹ of 1626 (alluding to the written request made in 1623 by this Religious for permission to acquire a Residence at Shiraz):

“The king did not then reply on this point and, it is said, did not give his decision, as ‘he was waiting for the Father to go and see him . . .’ (i.e. at Farrahabad),

and about July–August 1626 also the Vicar Provincial, Fr. Leander, must have had an interview with the Shah at Farrahabad, and been followed in 1627 by Fr. John Thaddeus himself, on the evidence of a letter² of Fr. Dimas, 30.5.1627:

“We are expecting Fr. John Thaddeus from Shiraz. . . . Fr. John Thaddeus is returning ‘to Isfahan in order to go and see the king about a matter likely to cause annoyance to ‘his Majesty, who will probably give Fr. John Thaddeus the same reply and mortification ‘as the king did to Fr. Leander, then Vicar Provincial of the Mission. The Father (John ‘Thaddeus) wanted to negotiate with the Khan of Shiraz, but the latter would give no ‘reply whatever: it is *about war affairs*. The Father is coming without money, and I know ‘well he will need a great deal for his journeys. . . .’

It may be surmised that “war affairs” referred to Portuguese naval pressure in the Gulf: Fr. Leander had come from the seat of the viceroy of Goa and was a Spaniard like Fr. John Thaddeus. For only two or three months later, according to a letter from the Portuguese Fr. Basil from Basra of 26.2.1628:³

“A considerable fleet sailed from Goa some six or seven months ago, without doubt ‘with the intention of recapturing Hurmuz by the help of God. But it was broken up by ‘a tempest: part reached Masqat, and the other part, they do not yet know here whether ‘it went elsewhere or sank: a thing which appears an evident punishment from God for ‘our sins. After that, last summer the General of the Straits” (i.e. the Persian Gulf) ‘made an attack on Bahrain, the pearl island, which is still in the power of the Shah and, although ‘he destroyed the town and the palm-trees and burnt many vessels, all the same he did ‘not succeed in taking it as it was too strong. But this spring, some say, he will return: ‘and we shall see what will result, both as regards Bahrain and as regards Hurmuz, matters ‘of much importance for India, at least according to public opinion, which counts much ‘in such cases: the General captured something else, but of less importance. I sent on to ‘Goa the letters from the king of Spain, accompanied by others from the grandees of ‘Spain too in regard to a subsidy being paid for twelve of our Religious in these parts— ‘which being so, your Reverence will not have so much preoccupation, as it will be a ‘material help towards our support. . . .’

It was in 1628 that another element first entered Persia, to complicate still further the situation—for obviously the field in the city at that juncture offered no scope for evangelization, above all for so restricted a number as was sent: it suited the policy of Cardinal Richelieu that the Capuchin Order should be established in the Persian dominions. On 23.6.1628 Frs. Gabriel of Paris and Juste of Beauvais and Pacifique of Provins left Aleppo for Persia, arriving in 25 days. They went to Qazwin.⁴ “The Capuchin Fathers . . . were well received by the ‘king, and he has given them houses both here and in Baghdad . . .” wrote Fr. Dimas from Isfahan, 15.12.1628. One of them brought a letter from the king of France: and it was as ambassadors of France that they were regarded for the rest of the century.

¹ Fr. Dominic of S. Mary, 27.6.1626, to Rome.

² O.C.D. 237 b. Perhaps the “matter” and the “mortification” were over the presentation of Pope Gregory XV’s Brief of 10.6.1623, calling on ‘Abbas I to restore Hurmuz to the Portuguese?

³ O.C.D., 241 g.

⁴ See Fr. Clemente da Terzorio, *Missioni dei Minori Cappucini*, vol. III, Rome, 1920: ‘Missioni di Persia e Mesopotamia.’