

“whose tact and knowledge of the Armenian tongue, and sincere interest in all Armenians  
“and all oriental Christians had contributed much to the good understanding died: and  
“he seems to have left no successor. . . .”

To the next reign will be left an account of the development of this important portion of Carmelite interest at the central mission in Isfahan. As to the Residence at Shiraz,

“after the disappearance” (i.e. the killing of Imam Quli Khan early in 1633) “of the prince  
“of that place, who was exceedingly kind to and helped financially the Religious dwelling  
“at that hospice, things have greatly changed, and the Religious suffer considerably for  
“which reason they are little pleased to be there. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

“Since the death of the Khan, this town is half-ruined,”<sup>2</sup> wrote another Carmelite in 1636. From the end of 1631 in fact there had been no priest of the Order there, the Definitory General having ordered the closing of the Residence: only after the Chapter General of 1632 the new Praepositus General urged the reopening, which for want of funds had to remain in abeyance till November 1634. After the reopening the new Vicar, Fr. Ignatius, reported, 19.12.1634:

“There are few Christians in the town, but many of them in some villages near here—  
“Georgians made slaves: and there may also be some Christian Circassians, but I do not  
“know. I hope to see them soon, and learn all . . .”

and, 13.8.1636, from the pen of the Vicar Provincial came the sequel:

“Some time ago Fr. Ignatius went to explore a certain district<sup>3</sup> where there are many  
“hamlets of Christians, Circassians by race, ‘slaves of the Crown’, who for some time past  
“had expressed a desire to be helped spiritually, but out of fear do not dare to have much  
“communication with us. The same can be said of the Georgians who are living scattered  
“in many villages of that province, the poor people keeping in secret to the name of  
“Christians. That would be a (good) work to help those poor souls, as the above-named  
“two Fathers will report to your Eminence in greater detail, desiring that more missionaries  
“be sent to those parts to get to know the language of the inhabitants and go about in the  
“fashion of the country, so as not to be recognized by the Muslims, and thus they might be  
“received by those Christians without fear. . . .”

These were the colonies of Christians so cruelly made slaves of 'Abbas I and transplanted to Fars, deprived of the opportunities of practising their Faith. For reasons not recorded, or from loss of the records concerned, nothing more is known of work among these Christians by Fr. Ignatius and his companions before his departure to Basra in 1641—their distance from Shiraz may well have proved an obstacle—but in 1640 Fr. Dionysius of the Crown of Thorns, a zealous seeker for souls to save, while temporarily stationed at Shiraz (where he found “no Christian Catholics”) wrote to the Sac. Congregation, 16.2.1640,<sup>4</sup> with regard to:

“a district called Kamfiruz, three days' journey” (i.e. NW.) “from here, where there are  
“said to be 3,000–4,000 men of Circassian race brought here by the late Shah of Persia  
“about 25–26 years ago. They are obliged to go with the army whenever summoned. He  
“had allowed them liberty to remain in their religion, but *not* to build churches. At first  
“they had priests, but these died off many years ago. . . . I think the best plan to help  
“them would be to take a house among them for so many months. . . . There are some of  
“this race in other parts. At Asupas,<sup>5</sup> four days' journey from here, 40–50 families: but  
“these many years ago were made Muslims by force, though secretly they keep up their

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Dimas, 2.12.1636, O.C.D. 237 b.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Ignatius, 7.11.1636, O.C.D. 238 r.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Dimas, O.C.D. 237 b. This was probably Ramjird district, north-west of Persepolis.

<sup>4</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 209, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> In NW. of Fars province.