

“and so I reported everything once more to the Fr. Visitor in detail, so that he might try to do something with the Viceroy. . . . I decided to cross to Isfahan, where I am now awaiting a reply from the Fr. Visitor. Although they are by way of being people in a terrible state, and that is also the reason which renders them odious to the Portuguese, and for sure God knows what I have suffered in the little time I was with them in taking their part on many occasions with the local inhabitants, and especially with the officials of the Sultan of this strait of Hurmuz, who are very much opposed to giving asylum to these Mandaecans. . . .”

Not only Fr. Eustace from Goa was sent by the Visitor General, but from Isfahan Fr. Melchior of the Kings was dispatched in August 1634 by the Vicar Provincial “to aid the Fathers sent from Goa to teach and convert these ‘Christians of S. John,’” only on arrival at Kung that October to hear that because of the Arab rising against the Portuguese he could do nothing on the Arabian coast, and to abandon the mission given him.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand Fr. Basil from Basra in November 1634 wrote to Rome:<sup>2</sup>

“. . . regarding the ‘Christians of S. John’. . . . I have just had a long report . . . it has been a matter of great pleasure for the Viceroy . . . and he has spent a great deal on them and showed them great consideration; but at present they are considerably diminished in numbers and disturbed because, when they went to take possession of the land for which they were asking, they found it occupied by the Arabs . . . they were obliged to remain in Masqat, a bad place . . . where they have only the ‘king’s quarter’, insufficient for them. Recently I had three letters from their chief man . . . telling me that he was leaving for Goa, where he had already first gone. . . .”

The protagonist of this transplanting of the Mandaecans, Fr. Basil of S. Francis, left Basra for Rome by 1636; the half-dozen letters preserved of his immediate successor, Fr. Stephen of Jesus, do not refer to the Mandaecans: and it is only from a letter of 29.8.1643 written by the next Vicar of Basra, Fr. Ignatius of Jesus, that a revival of the movement to transplant this race is learnt:

“The bearer is a Sabaeon, who has become a Catholic together with some others of his community, going to Rome. Last year” (i.e. 1642) “the *General of the Straits of Hurmuz* by orders of the Viceroy of Goa wrote to me, giving me the commission to *send to India* all these ‘Christians of S. John’ scattered in these parts. I began at once to discuss the business in such a way that 30 of them were already prepared to go as pioneers to inspect the place which the Portuguese want to give them, i.e. certain lands in *Ceylon*. But they were denounced to the Muslim Arabs and some of them arrested, so that of the 30 only five left carrying letters for the rest of their community.

“This year, when I was thinking that I should be able to settle the business with greater success, a much greater obstacle has interfered, because this year no convoy of Portuguese vessels is coming—in fact every day the arrival of the general with a fleet to make war on the Pasha is expected. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

Although the rest of the story of the relations of the Carmelites with the Mandaecans properly lies outside the reign of Shah Safi and this chapter, it may be more convenient here to include it.<sup>4</sup> On 19.12.1646 Fr. Ignatius from Basra once more addressed the Cardinals of the Sac. Congregation:

<sup>1</sup> Vide Fr. Melchior's letters, 8.8.1634: O.C.D. 238 b and 9.10.1634: 12.10.1634 from Kung, *S.R.*, vol. 106, pp. 280-8.

<sup>2</sup> O.C.D. 241 g., 20.11.1634.

<sup>3</sup> O.C.D., 241 m., and 28.6.1644, *S.R.*, vol. 62, p. 212.

<sup>4</sup> A Brief of Innocent X in Arch. Vat., *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 54, p. 69, undated, but from its position in the record probably of 1644 or 1645, is addressed to “All the Christians of S. John”, inviting them to submit to the Holy See. It is given in the appendix.