

“faithful to Him, and We shall beseech Him to lead You to the knowledge of His Faith, without which no road lies open to eternal salvation, begging in the meantime Your Highness to receive with Your customary courtesy Our beloved sons, Azariah and Antony of the Order of S. Dominic, who are coming to You in Our name with a certain small gift, and heartily praying for You a long enjoyment of Your present felicity.

“Given at S. Mary Major, Rome, under the Fisherman’s ring, the 25th day of October 1672, and in the fourth year of Our pontificate.”

One of the few Persian letters of the Shahs preserved in original by those then in charge of the Papal correspondence is that giving Shah Sulaiman’s acknowledgment of this Brief, to be found in A.A. Arm. I–XVIII, No. 761 (a photograph being shown on the opposite page).. A copy in twentieth-century Persian typescript is also given for convenience of orientalists: the extravagance of the alliterative and abstract terms in Arabic, with which the Pope is apostrophized, makes it out of the question for exact translation to convey sense, but the following is as close a version as possible:

“Pope Clement the Tenth,

“The friendly communications of His Holiness, liege lord of the greatest monarchs of the faith of Jesus, and governor of the mightiest Christian potentates, Pope Clement the Tenth, became the cause of an enhancement of friendship and good relations, and the means of an increase of pleasure and delight (received) in company with the best of his compeers, Francis Piskop, at a time when, by the grace of Almighty God and the power of ever-increasing good fortune, the doors of success and prosperity had opened at the display of (Our) wishes and aspirations, and when the ways of enjoyment and cheerfulness were provided in every direction.

“As to the remarks recorded by Your amiable pen in recommending and explaining the desires of Padre Azaria and Padre Antonio, the other co-religionists of Your Holiness, and the Christians residing in the province of Azarbaijan, We have ordained that the great viceroys, commanders, ministers and governors of the country of Azarbaijan should treat them in the same manner as was deemed fitting by the august opinion and consent of that illustrious occupant of the seat of honour and loftiness,¹ and that no one should cause them any trouble contrary to order and justice, and that they (the governors, etc.) should afford help and succour to that community in every respect.

“Your Highness should ever observe this laudable practice, and intimate the true condition of affairs, and state the aims and affairs You may have in these parts, thus strengthening the bonds of friendship and amity, and opening the doors of alliance and concord, so that (Our sublime) royal mind may be directed and exerted towards the attainment thereof.

“May Your reign, majesty and learning endure. . . .”

There is no date given in the body of the letter, nor is any paper attached to show the date of its handing over in Isfahan to the messenger, or of its receipt in Rome; but, since Fr. Francis Piskop, O.P., who received his commission as a missionary in Rome in April 1672 and left subsequently to that date, is mentioned by Shah Sulaiman as having brought to him Pope Clement’s Brief: and, as Fr. Piskop reached Abranar (Nakhchiwan) 2.1.1674² and wrote from Abranar, 21.7.1674, it may be presumed that delivery of Pope Clement’s letter took place in 1673, and the Shah’s reply was issued possibly in 1673 also.

The inscription on the seal at the back reads:

(On the upper portion): Allah, Muhammad, and ’Ali.

(Underneath it): O Imam Husain.

(Inside the border circle): Sulaiman is the slave of the king of Religion 1078 (i.e. A.H.) which began 23.6.1667.

¹ The Shah refers to himself.

² S.R., vol. 450, p. 154; *Idem*, vol. 456, p. 116.