

“to be the priest sent by Mgr Pidou, who was not yet consecrated and not within his ‘jurisdiction.’”

In the *Vita P. F. Elia a S. Alberto*¹ by Lay Brother Francis of S. Sirus, it is stated that Fr. Elias had himself suggested a certain Armenian friar for appointment as Bishop of Isfahan, and that in 1693 Pope Innocent XII sent for a son of Khwajeh Murad Shariman, who was in Rome, asking for information regarding the person proposed, and received the reply: “Holy Father, we Catholics want no other bishop than Fr. Elias.” The Vicar Provincial of the Carmelites had himself written, 1.10.1693:²

“We were also greatly encouraged by the hope which your Excellency gave us, that in ‘the first Congregation there would be a fresh discussion about making an ‘archbishop’ for the Armenian people at Isfahan, while having every consideration for and pleasing ‘the Armenian Sharimans by giving them their own shepherd. . . .”

It is probable that in part the Sacr. Congregation was moved to recommend the appointment of a bishop at Isfahan because of the endowments promised, according to Fr. Elias’ letters, by the Shariman brothers—a promise which had no stability, inasmuch as there was no safe, assured endowment fund: almost from the beginning it failed and involved the bishops appointed in a penurious and crippled existence.

The Shariman, or Sarrat, family (in Italian usually spelt Scerimani), of whom mention has already several times been made, had given evidence of zealous generosity for the cause of the propagation of the Catholic Faith: thus, referring to the opening of a Carmelite Residence in Julfa, Fr. Elias of S. Albert in his letter of 24.7.1691³ spoke of Khwajeh Murad Shariman:

“by the generosity of whom we have not only a fine and commodious Residence, but also ‘sustenance for two or three missionaries who will be able to exist there without other ‘funds, so long as the capital they have provided lasts. . . .”

A son of Khwajeh Markar Shariman died and left to the new foundation a ‘Hamman’ (or Persian vapour bath) which from its use by the public brought in 60 Roman scudi annually, so that with the 200 Tumans from a ‘trustee’ deposit in charge of the Shariman family an income of 18 Tumans annually was obtained. Now, too, they were offering to maintain any bishop, who might be appointed to the see of Isfahan:

“Khwajeh Markar Shariman had already made a present of a very fine ‘palace’” (the subject of the dispute with Mgr Pidou) “together with 3,000–4,000 scudi, which he promises ‘to invest in some funds, in order to give a start to the bishopric. . . .”⁴

In other directions, too, the Shariman family had gained prestige in the eyes of the authorities in Italy: a letter from Isfahan, dated 10.10.1694,⁵ mentions that Markar Shariman had given 200,000 ducats to the Republic of Venice “to aid it in the war against the Turks”, and to that loan there was allusion in Fr. Elias’ letter to the Sacr. Congregation, 1.10.1693:⁶

“there was much satisfaction over the employment of part of this money under the direction ‘of the Nuncio in Venice, and we hope that no less advantage will accrue from what is ‘done with the rest, on the advice and with the help of the Cardinals. . . .”

At this point—the relative situation as regards the two bishoprics of Baghdad and Isfahan having been made clear as far as the end of Shah Sulaiman’s reign—it is convenient to break

¹ O.C.D. 320 e.

⁴ *S.N.R.*, II, p. 3.

² *S.N.R.*, II, p. 87, Fr. Elias.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 114.

³ O.C.D. 238 u.

⁶ *Idem*, p. 87.