

“separated. . . . I have written to India to see whether the illustrious Archbishop and his Excellency the Viceroy of Goa would be pleased for this function to be done in their presence: if a favourable reply come, besides the comfort I should have of being able to be consecrated by three bishops, in various localities the opportunity will not be lacking for me to deal with the Armenians and in Goa also to see whether the affairs of our missions can be arranged. . . .”

Before he could have received any reply from Goa, on 10.5.1695 accompanied by Fr. Cherubin the Franciscan Tertiary already named and three servants, he set out on the eleven-day journey by caravan to Hamadan with the intention of being consecrated there by the Bishop of Baghdad; but the latter was desirous of going to Isfahan and thence to Basra, so Fr. Elias put off his own consecration¹ and they returned together, staying on the way at Armenian villages and arriving at the capital, 4.7.1695. The main reason, however, was a change of his own mind, as he disclosed in his letter of 22.8.1695:²

“I am putting off my consecration until the end of September, hoping to receive in the meantime some favourable answer to my representations made about a year ago; in the hope, too, of the succour asked of His Holiness and the Sac. Congregation: from it our Catholic people would derive comfort, and they would gather the more freely and festively at the solemnity. . . .”

However, it was October of the following year, 1696, when Don Gregorio Pereira Fidalgo, a civilian special envoy from Portugal, reached Isfahan:³

“In a short time they expect in this capital the Portuguese ambassador, who is coming with great pomp: some of his baggage mules have already arrived. The Persians have already resolved to make war on the Arabs of Masqat in union with the Portuguese.⁴ If that should turn out successful, the Franks in these lands will regain the esteem they formerly enjoyed. . . . Mgr Elias hopes to return to Julfa after the arrival of the ambassador, the more so as his great enemy, Stephen the Vartapet, is out of the country. . . .”

Meanwhile, there had been little delay, after the Carmelite Procurator brought the appeal from Isfahan, before Pope Innocent XII acted, for his Brief to Shah Sultan Husain is dated 28.1.1695:⁵

“Illustrious and most puissant king, greeting and the light of Divine grace.

“Among the excellent qualities worthy of a great king, with which Your Highness is distinguished, We have it sufficiently and more than well known and established that a chief place is demanded by the benignity with which You regard those professing the Christian Faith. But, because the propagation of this same Faith is the main object of Our desire, We earnestly ask of that same benevolence of Yours that You will grant to the Discalced Carmelite Fathers and especially to Our venerable brother Elias, Bishop of Isfahan, Your celebrated royal capital, whom We recommend to You very emphatically, free permission to return to the town Julfa (as they call it) from which at the instance of the schismatic Armenian archbishop, so We have understood, they were compelled to depart, heavy penalties having been pronounced against them, should they go back there. But having come into the firm hope that You will accede to Our request We fervently pray the Lord

¹ Fr. Elias, 23.5.1695, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 131.

² *S.N.R.*, II, p. 146.

³ Letter of Fr. John Bartholomew, O.P., Julfa, 5.10.1696, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 173.

⁴ The writer's next letter of 29.1.1697 (*S.N.R.*, II, p. 184) puts the position differently:

“There is a Portuguese ambassador who has come to request the Persians to declare war against the Arabs, but, though they have every reason for doing so, I doubt they will adopt such an undertaking.”

⁵ Arch. Secr. Vat. *Epist. ad Princ.*, 81, p. 31.