

“deposited at interest with them about thirty years previously by Monsieur Tavernier, a French trader renowned for his *Journeys*, whose heir he claimed to be on account of having married his (Tavernier’s) relative in Paris. As his advocate for this claim he got a very crafty individual, son of an apostate Armenian and nephew of a schismatic priest, who by his intelligence had attained an influential position at the Persian Court. Some false testimony was tendered to the court by the same sort of apostates and against it none of the schismatic Armenians could be brought to give notice about the patent imposture, while Catholic witnesses were rejected as being biased. When, notwithstanding, appeal had been made to other judges and the falsification of the written documents and of his very letter (of credence) as envoy was demonstrated, the Sharimans were secretly cited, and the author of all the malice against the Catholics said that he too knew right well that the claim in this case was frivolous, but that by that pretext he was going to extract from them to the last farthing the money deposited by them at Venice, and in this way to keep them from any rebuilding of our church, which had been destroyed, as also from having any communication with the missionary Fathers and Catholics: and that, unless they did so, besides being despoiled of all their goods, they would also have to be forced to do so. Not only the Sharimans, but also all the other Catholics being extremely alarmed, it was recommended to me, at whom our adversaries appeared particularly to aim in this fierce persecution, to withdraw, as the opportunity of this embassy was offering, and see whether by chance by means of it I might be able to negotiate with the Christian kings and princes something as a remedy to such great tribulation. . . .”

This was in 1699: as to the money in Venice a report, undated,<sup>1</sup> on the Sarrat or Shariman family to the Sacr. Congregation in Rome, where one of them was at the time, was to the effect that:

‘in Isfahan they have 50 domestics, 100 employees in their merchants’ business. Because one of them had unfortunately become a Muslim and, when his relatives die, all their estate will have to go to him, they think of establishing themselves in Christendom and putting part of the family there: and so they have transferred to Venice 200,000 scudi, for 100,000 to be employed in that city, the rest in Rome with the approval of the Sacr. Congregation. . . .’

The money placed in Venice was invested in banks there.<sup>2</sup> So, zealously championed by Bishop Elias and backed by the other Orders in Isfahan, so that they always enjoyed the esteem of the Roman Curia, and with their extensive trading relations in Venice and Leghorn the Shariman family had not only been granted the freedom of customs at Ancona and the citizenship of Rome, but they were also ennobled as ‘Counts of the Holy Roman Empire’<sup>3</sup> and appear frequently in letters so named ‘Conte Marcar’, ‘Conte Stefano’, including those resident in Isfahan. A genealogical tree showing the various members of this family mentioned in the archives in Rome consulted for this work is included as an appendix, for the information of any possible descendants in Europe.

But two of the four surviving brothers broke under the pressure, hardly had Bishop Elias gone off to Europe, for a letter of the Carmelite Vicar Provincial Substitute reported to Rome:<sup>4</sup>

“You will have heard of the apostasy to Muhammadanism of the principal Sharimans, Markar and Michael, on 10.12.1699. They were really persecuted to pay an immense

<sup>1</sup> *S.N.R.*, II, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop Elias’ memorial to the Doge and Senate, 2.5.1702, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 418.

<sup>3</sup> From a standard work on the *Nobility of Italy* the following facts are quoted:

“The Emperor Leopold in 1699 granted to this family (of Shariman–Scerimani) the title of Count of Hungary and kingdoms annexed to it, a title confirmed by the Emperor Francis I by a decree of 24.7.1817. In 1696 it was inscribed by Innocent XII in (the rolls of) the citizenship of Rome: in 1736, 1737, 1740, 1742, 1749, 1751 it was made a member of the nobility of Orvieto, Rhodes, Spoleto, Viterbo, Perugia, Macerata respectively.” (See appendix.)

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Basil, 2.2.1700, *S.R.*, vol. 538, p. 407.