

“He died acclaimed as a saint . . . so that it was necessary to divide up his clothes to satisfy the violence of the devotion of the people there. The Archbishop and clergy “wanted to have his corpse.”

A list of the money and effects, mostly gold and silver articles, episcopal vestments, etc., as received from Mozambique is to be found in the Carmelite archives; but as to his will bequeathing them and his other personalty to the mission at Julfa occasion for reference will occur at a later stage in this narrative.

Like the first the third Bishop of Isfahan had died travelling to his diocese; he had been less than three years resident as its Ordinary: climatic conditions on the high plateau of Iran would have proved hard on a man of 65: it was over late for him to be returning. The reader will have noticed that the contribution made by Fr. Elias of S. Albert to the work of the Order in Persia, the direction in which his activities were bent from his first arrival, was radically different from that of his predecessors as vicars provincial in the previous hundred years. It is hardly too much to say that, from the time Fr. Elias of S. Albert had charge, the Carmelites became missionaries to the Armenians of Julfa, and ceased to work among the real Persians: even the century-old convent of the Order in the capital was allowed to become ruinous and deserted for the hospice at Julfa, and hardly a word is mentioned about the other missions in correspondence. But it is certain that the very numerous Armenian Uniat community at Julfa numbering several thousands in the middle of the eighteenth century, and the one thousand estimated as still in Persia today, and those portions of the community which migrated to Baghdad and Basra to become the nucleus of the Armenian Catholic colonies in the twentieth century so flourishing in these latter times were due to his persistence and tireless teaching and preaching—he and his collaborators, the Shariman family, were the real founders and organizers of the Uniats in the whole of that region. Only his methods were, as can be read from his letters, brusque and antagonizing: and he made mistakes, above all in trusting too much in the Shariman family to make provision for the bishopric, as also in founding the hospice at Julfa without assuring financial support for it.

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Apart from those of the Carmelite Bishop, the letters from the pens of members of the Order in or visiting Persia during this reign which have been preserved and afford material for the history of their work are much fewer in number than in earlier times—not above one hundred, and the majority are in the archives of the Sac. Congregation: it may be surmised that this was a period when for the most part the main interests of the Order and its Definitory General were not in the missions and that the junior Religious were not bidden and encouraged to write and describe regularly the state of affairs, politically and spiritually: or it may be that risks on the road prevented more communications from reaching destination safely. But from the material which survives it is evident that two principal wants hampered the work of the four ‘Persian’ posts and inflicted hardship on the Carmelites during much of the reign—non-receipt of the annual allowance from their endowment fund, and non-dispatch to Persia of sufficient missionaries to keep the posts regularly staffed. It is a remarkable fact that during more than 150 years that the mission was active no benefactor ever added to the original, modest endowment by baron Cimini in 1604: there is no indication (at least from 1650) that the Order itself contributed a single scudo.

In the preceding reigns the reader has read how under the administration of the Sac. Congregation the annual interest on the fund was not all transferred to the original destination, but two-fifths made over to Carmelite houses at Aleppo and Mt. Carmel, which were entirely independent of the Persian Mission: this was after more than half the total yield of interest had already been deducted at source to pay for the upkeep of the Seminary at San Pancrazio,