

“long passed after the proclamation when a soldier of his guard presented himself before Nadir Shah and had the courage to say that he had fired the shots against him. . . . The Shah-in-Shah questioned him whether he had been moved by hatred to do the act, or by the suggestion or command of other persons. The soldier answered that he had been ordered to do it by Lutf 'Ali, cousin of Nadir Shah, and by the commander of his guard, who was none other than his own son, to whom he had married the daughter of the Mogul emperor. He then gave orders that they should be at once brought before him: and he was obeyed, as they had not had the time to get away from the hands of the soldiers, who for the most part were faithful to the Shah. When all the criminals had been brought to his presence and reproached for their felony, he ordered that the sum promised to the soldier should be paid: and then, protesting that, although he had sworn to spare the lives of the guilty parties, he had not done so to leave them unpunished, he ordered that on the instant their eyes should be put out with the point of a knife, and as an act of grace sent off the soldier on a visit to the Shrine of 'Ali, a great prophet of the Persians” (i.e. at Najaf in Mesopotamia, or 'Iraq as it is now known, the great place of pilgrimage for Shiah Muslims in addition to Karbala.) “I myself a year afterwards conversed on several occasions with that soldier and from his mouth in Baghdad heard all this related.

“On account of this incident the honour of alone furnishing the guard for the king, their fellow-provincial, was taken away from the Khurasanis; even though they had numbered as many as ten thousand in it, all of them were removed, and in their stead the honour was given to as many schismatic Armenian Christians to whom he promised the freedom of practising their religion and at the charge of the royal treasury always maintained their priests in comfort and dignity, and desired that their religious observances should be strictly observed.”

Confirmation of this incident comes from another Latin missionary source. In 1738 the Capuchin Fr. Damian from Lyons was sent to their mission at Tabriz, and¹ soon impressed to act as physician to Nadir Shah and his cousin 'Ali Quli, until in 1746 the Jesuit Lay Brother Brazin replaced him. From Aleppo, 5.3.1743,² Mgr Emmanuel of S. Albert forwarded to the Cardinal Prefect copies of two letters “written from the camp of the king of Persia, received here a short while ago”, headed ‘copy of a letter from Fr. Damian of Lyons, Capuchin, written to their Fr. Custodian at Aleppo’: the second dated Tiflis 22.10.1742 contains the news:

“The Shah has had plucked out the eyes of his son, Riza Quli Mirza, *that is the son who had a shot from a gun fired at his father . . .*”,

so that the punishment can hardly have followed immediately on discovery of the identity of those implicated.

An important point emerges from that letter—already by November 1742 Nadir Shah, with his megalomania on the one hand and a gluttony for shedding blood and gloating over men's bodily torments, was unsound in mind, “suffering from fits of melancholia”. The letters merit transcription in the original French:

(From the army of the king of Persia in the mountains in the Caucasus near Darband.)
 “21.9.1742. Il y a environ six mois, que j'étois sur le point de partir pour me rendre à Diarbekir selon l'ordre de Vostre Révérence, le Roy de Perse me fit venir en poste à Derbent, pour avoir soin de M. le Résident de Russie, qui estoit dangereusement malade d'une scorbutie qui l'avoit ietté dans une atrophie si grande qu'il en est mort. Affinque que le Roy ne fût pas mécontent de moi ie luy fis promptement une représentation que

¹ Vide Fr. C. da Terzorio, *Missioni dei Minori Cappuccini*, vol. III, Rome, 1920.

² *S.N.R.*, V, p. 74.