

Two years passed before the correspondence extant again refers to the situation: and then a letter of 14.9.1756 from Basra<sup>1</sup> mentions vaguely:

“Up till now Persia continues in revolution: it would seem as if it was about to wear a better appearance, since for eight months already<sup>2</sup> at the most there has been a ‘king’ residing in Isfahan by the name of Shah Isma’il, who after having reigned for three years in Isfahan already, seven years previously<sup>3</sup> . . . so that there is ground for hoping for the best. . . .”

But of this puppet Shah Isma’il Safawi, of whose nominal reign of some three years and eight months neither histories nor coinage appear to have left traces, two months later, 8.11.1756,<sup>4</sup> the same Carmelite reported:

“In accordance with the instructions given me it is my duty to inform Mgr Lercari, Archbishop of Rhodes, that at the end of the campaign of the year 1756, in the month of September last, the acknowledged king of Persia was once again driven from his throne by the army general named Azad Khan, head of the Afghans, who now commands in Isfahan. . . .”

Yet by 20.5.1757—temporarily—the warring forces had been moved elsewhere, for the man on the spot, Fr. Raymond Berselli, O.P., remarked:<sup>5</sup>

“At present this city is without a master. There are neither Afghans nor Qajars nor Zands. . . .”

But three months later, 23.8.1757,<sup>6</sup> from Basra, the Vicar General Fr. Hyacinth recorded the final elimination of the Afghan competitor, Azad Khan:

“In Persia there has been a great battle and one of the pretenders has won it, and entirely defeated the army of Azad Khan, the pretender to the throne, who has fled from Persia and with 54 men only escaped and come to Baghdad, where he has been received by Sulaiman Pasha of Baghdad. This Azad Khan is the head of the Afghans who have totally sacked all Persia. . . .”

Fr. Raymond Berselli, O.P., in another letter, 8.2.1758,<sup>7</sup> explained to the Secretary to the Sac. Congregation, Mgr Antonelli, how the process of elimination had progressed:

“Friday, 8.11.1754. Advices from Shiraz mention that Azad Khan left that place last month for Spahaun: that he had lost many fine soldiers in the several encounters that he had with Karim Khan in the mountains of Kamarij.” (On the steep ascent of the Kutal-i-Kamarij, which is off the high road from Bushire to Kazarun, the site of the fighting is still traditionally indicated, the Kutal itself being known locally as ‘Kutal-i-Azad Khani’.)

“28.11.1754. In our last address we acquainted you of Azad Khan’s being at Shiraz, from whence he proceeded to Kazarun in quest of Karim Khan, who had gathered together about 6,000 men, with whom he kept on the mountains of Kamarij, where he had several skirmishes with Azad Khan, whose men, being unacquainted with those mountains, were finally defeated. Karim Khan has likewise taken the road for Spahaun.

“April 1755. Advices from Spahaun mention that Azad Caun still continues oppressing the inhabitants and has put to death many people.”

“4.2.1756. Affairs in this kingdom continue still in the same fluctuating state as for some years past. Azad Caun, who for some time has been in the government of Spahaun and the adjacent country” (i.e. ruling over, possessed of Isfahan and its district) “left that city on 13.11.(1755), going to the assistance of his general, Fath ’Ali Caun, who had, however, been defeated at Kashan by Hassan Khan Qajar. In November” (i.e. 1755) “Karim Khan left Shiraz with an intent to conquer Kirman . . . when advices were brought to him of Azad Khan having left Spahaun, upon which he immediately altered his resolution and bent his march on Spahaun, which city he got possession of without a ball being fired.”

“Sunday, 25.4.1756. Letters in three days from Spahaun advise that within a day’s journey of that place a battle has been fought between Hasan Khan Qajar and Karim Khan, in which the latter’s force was defeated, and he with 200-300 horse made his escape towards Shiraz, that Hasan Khan made his entry into Spahaun 26.3.1756 . . .”

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Hyacinth of S. Teresa, *S.R.*, vol. 773, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> See also *Acta* for 1757, Congregation session of 8.8.1757.

<sup>3</sup> *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 773.

<sup>5</sup> i.e. since about January 1756.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Hyacinth, *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 280.

<sup>7</sup> *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 380.