

“Baqir” (the fifth Imam), “the Truth-teller” (i.e. Imam Ja’far us-Sadiq, and the remaining six), “Kazim, Riza, Taqi, Naqi, ’Askari, and Mahdi”.

As to Bastam Quli Baig, it is clear from Pope Paul V’s Brief dated 8.10.1605 to Shah ’Abbas (Arm. XLV, vol. 1, p. 134) that he died on the journey before reaching Italy “prevented by death he was unable to acquit himself of his embassy” (see text in appendix).

Now that these early Portuguese Religious have been mentioned it is well to note (see the appendix of Latin Briefs) and to bear in mind the correspondence from the Holy See in regard to the Augustinians on the one hand and the Carmelites on the other, because their missions clashed to some extent, and friction came to a head at times. There is no evidence that the dispatch of the former was brought to the notice of, or approved by the Holy See at the time, or that they represented anything more than a move by the viceroy of the Indies to keep in touch with events in view of difficulties at Hurmuz, and by the archbishop of Goa, Primate of the Indies, to extend the limits of his (i.e. a Portuguese) ecclesiastical province, so as to keep missionary activity in the interior of Persia within the appanage of Portuguese Congregations. The third bishop of Isfahan, Mgr Elias of S. Albert, in a letter of 22.8.1695 to the Secretary of the Sac. Congregation de Propaganda Fide, Rome,¹ went so far as to assert that:

“The Portuguese in Goa . . . considering that this mission” (i.e. that of the Carmelites of 1604 from Rome) “would be in their district had time to deliberate over this business, and to forestall that of the Apostolic See by dispatching the Augustinian Fathers. Vexed at this, the Supreme Pontiff degraded the General of the Augustinians, until by the intercession of our (Carmelite) Fathers who had arrived there, and by the mediation of our venerable Fr. Peter of the Mother of God, confessor of His Holiness, the General in question was restored to favour . . . of all of which we have here” (i.e. in Isfahan) “a specific account written by the said Fr. John Thaddeus, and, should there be any need of it for any question, we can transmit certified copies . . .”

In this last assertion, and subsequent recital of steps taken by the Portuguese Augustinians at Isfahan, no reflection on, nor the least disparagement of that ancient and deservedly meritorious Order should be discerned by the reader. Individually those Portuguese members of it then at Isfahan were edifyingly pious in their community life, as the Carmelite Superior will be seen to testify: later, too, in 1642 it will be the Augustinian Prior who was appointed as his Vicar General by the Carmelite Bishop Bernard. Had they been Italians, or Frenchmen, or of any other race by nationality, the situation could never have arisen. But they were Portuguese and *not there as missionaries* of their Order—purely as diplomatists to push the interests of the Portuguese authorities in Hurmuz and Goa, and to act as agents for Portugal—and so it continued: witness the Superior of the Jesuits reporting generally² to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide nearly 150 years later (in 1745):

“. . . est etiam in civitate Conventus Augustiniorum . . . sed isti non sunt proprie missionarii, sed missi a Vice Rege Portugalliae qui residet Goae tanquam consules. . . .”

Doubtless Pope Clement VIII perceived at once that the dispatch of Portuguese Friars on such an errand by the Portuguese Authorities in Goa had a prejudicial side for the wider ecclesiastical interests of the Church; for the Portuguese at Hurmuz were the object of so much bitterness and dislike to Shah ’Abbas I that these Portuguese Augustinians were in a delicate and embarrassing position as clerics from the first: had Portuguese laymen been sent, it would have been better. Then, as diplomatists pushing Portuguese interests, these Portuguese Fathers committed a series of blunders—in seeking to claim religious jurisdiction (which involved a measure of protection) over all the Armenians, and about the consignment of silk to Europe, for instance. By so doing, and by not acting as a brake on Portuguese arbitrary deeds in Hurmuz, they did harm to the whole prospects for Catholicism in Persia.

¹ S.N.R. II, p. 146, letter of 22.8.1695.

² S.N.R. V, p. 360.