

A message from the Shah bade Fr. John Thaddeus not to bother about going back to his Majesty that winter, but to keep the letters till his arrival—some said it might be on 6.1.1619. How volatile, sometimes casual and unbusinesslike 'Abbas I was in such matters of correspondence over negotiations in Europe, when he went to much trouble in sending envoys, may be gathered from the following quotations from later letters of Fr. John Thaddeus: in a postscript of 28.6.1619, after finishing his letter of 25.5.1619¹ he added that he had been to see the Shah, 15 miles away, taking Fr. Leander, Vicar of Hurmuz, with him, and the post from Madrid with letters from Fr. Redempt and Robert Sherley:

“The king opened the letters and gave them to me to translate into Persian. The Shah “wondered at so long a time passing without news coming either from the Pope, or our “Fathers” (i.e. in Rome) “and asked the reason. I said that it was because his Highness’ “letters will not have got to Rome (yet). The Shah complained at Fr. Redempt being “detained so long at Madrid, remarking that those who esteemed themselves as most “obedient to the Pontiff” (the allusion being to the Spanish king) “served him least well— “why had they detained him” (i.e. at Madrid) “as he was dispatched to His Holiness. “This he (the Shah) said, because he had not forgotten his resentment over the mission of “Jangiz Baig (who went with Fr. Antonio de Gouvea, now Bishop of Cyrene) whom they “had not allowed to go on from Madrid to Rome. I do not know why Fr. Redempt has “remained at the Spanish Court two years. If it be on the Shah’s business, he was solely “sent to bear witness that Don Robert (Sherley), both the first time and this, has been” (i.e. genuinely) “the Shah’s ambassador.”

'Abbas I was unable to read his own language, it would appear, let alone European script; but, in contradistinction with the rapidity and summary swiftness in which claims and petitions and charges were dispatched by himself and his ministers, of this absence of any method and consequence with which he treated his correspondence with foreign states, and in particular these really important issues with Spain, we get further evidence and confirmation in the extracts from Pietro della Valle appended. After a description² of an audience the Shah had given on 2.8.1619:

“Five days before the king’s departure he sent our Fr. Vicar (Provincial) of the Discalced “Carmelites a large bundle of letters and documents (received) from Europe, to be trans- “lated.”

Also, in his letter of 21.10.1619 della Valle has more to say of those dispatches from Madrid and instructions to the ambassador, about which king Philip III had been so precise in March 1619:

“Two days later” (i.e. 16.9.1619) “the Fr. Vicar of the Discalced, one evening in the “Maidan, when I was present in such a manner as to see and hear everything, presented “to the king *some letters from Spain, which had come by way of Hurmuz, which the Captain of “Hurmuz had sent to Isfahan by a postman*³ to Don Garcia, so that the latter might give them “to the king of Persia. But Don Garcia, who had received them when already on the “road (back), had sent them on to the Fr. Vicar” (Provincial) “of the Discalced Carmelites, “begging him to do the duty in his absence. Don Garcia ordinarily confided more in the “Vicar (Provincial) of the Discalced than in the Portuguese Augustinians, not only because “the Vicar (Provincial) was better informed about Persian affairs, having been there many “years and well liked, more than all the others, by the Shah and the Court, but also “because he was a Spaniard by nationality and a Castilian. . . . On this occasion the “Fr. Vicar (Provincial) said to the Shah that he was keeping a box, so to speak, of other

¹ O.C.D. 237 m.

² P. della Valle: *Viaggi*, XXI, p. 60.

³ *Un 'huomo a poste* is the term used, as still in England.