

In a letter of 20.7.1629¹ the Vicar General mentioned a reply from Shah Safi to the letter from Pope Urban VIII:

"I send your Reverence a copy of the letter which the new king, Shah Safi, writes to the Sovereign Pontiff in reply to one which Fr. Dominic of Christ² brought for the deceased monarch, Shah 'Abbas. The letter in question from the Sovereign Pontiff had been written in the year 1624: and it has been a special providential dispensation of the Lord that it was so much delayed in transit, since it has served very considerably in" (assisting) "the negotiations with the new king for the stablishing³ of this mission and for the confirmation and amplification of the favours and privileges granted us by the late Shah. According to what I have understood, the former Visitor of this mission, Fr. Eugenius of S. Benedict,⁴ should have been the bearer of this letter; but, as it had not been possible to get it ready by the date of his departure from Rome, he did not bring it with him: and I gather that our" (Carmelite) "Fathers, when they came out to the mission at Aleppo, brought it with them and waited for a good opportunity to send it on to Persia. So it will be necessary for your Reverence to give an explanation to His Holiness about these circumstances. . . . When I presented His Holiness' letter to the new king . . . he himself took it into his own hands and, having opened it, handed it back to me so that I should have it translated into Persian and, when it was translated, I returned it to him: and when the king had heard it read, he gave instructions for a reply to be sent to His Holiness and for this reply to be dispatched as urgently as possible. . . ."

The reply from Shah Safi met with almost as much dilatoriness in delivery as that of the last letter from the Pope to Shah 'Abbas, for a new Visitor General, Fr. Epiphanius of S. John Baptist, reached Isfahan on August 17th before Fr. Dimas had sent off his own letter. By the Visitor, when he went south to Shiraz and Basra, it was dispatched, as can be seen from another letter of Fr. Dimas, 18.2.1630:

". . . At the beginning of his reign Shah Safi replied to the Pope . . . telling his secretary also to give us a copy, so that the Persian might be put into Latin. *The original in Persian goes sealed with the royal seal inside a purse of the finest brocade: this the Fr. Visitor carries with him, so that it may come the more surely to the hands of His Holiness. . . .*"

This reply of Shah Safi is next mentioned in a letter, dated 25.12.1631,⁵ addressed from Goa by Fr. Epiphanius, the Visitor, to the Secretary of the Sac. Congregation:

". . . The calamities and miseries caused in the East by hunger, pestilence and wars, which ravage these parts and which continue increasing . . . so that neither letters nor correspondence pass, as they used to pass. . . . Things being thus in suspense, of necessity there has been delayed in Basra for 1½ years a letter from the king of Persia addressed to His Holiness. I am now sending it by sea to Monsignor the Collector of Portugal,⁶ as it has not been able to get through by way of Aleppo. To it are adjoined two translations in Latin, one according to the meaning of the words, another according to the style of the Persian phrases. . . ."

This was the letter from Shah Safi to which Pope Urban VIII made reference in his Brief of 9.1.1633, already translated in this work, which communicated the consecration of Fr. John Thaddeus as Bishop of Isfahan. No trace of the original in Persian—which would have been highly interesting in a series from the Persian kings—has been observed by the present compiler

¹ Fr. Dimas, O.C.D. 237 b.

² He reached Isfahan December 1628.

³ 'Stabilimento' may perhaps apply to the vague title of occupation of the convent—royal property—without rent or contract.

⁴ He left Rome in 1624.

⁵ *S.R.*, vol. 104, p. 299, 'Lettere di Spagna'.

⁶ The representative of the Vatican in Lisbon, performing the office of a nuncio.