

(Around the border): If the guide of thy grace should keep us company Heaven shall carry our royal terrain on its shoulder.

(In the middle of the last inscription): O Imam Husain.

But, apart from oppressive taxation by local officials and the iniquitous law devised to force Christians to become Muslim, at the end of the 1660's the attitude of the schismatic Armenians towards the Uniats of their race must have become particularly virulent, for Brief after Brief of the Popes denounced it to Shah Sulaiman. It is an illuminating commentary on the progressive deterioration of the personal, direct rule of the Safawi monarchs that this persecution, not part of a Muslim or Court policy but altogether arbitrary from the side of the Gregorian Armenians, could exist without repression under Shah Sulaiman: it is difficult to envisage Shah 'Abbas I tolerating such conduct by one section of his subjects against another, however much he himself would mulct and oppress and be drastic against non-Muslim communities at times. These protests afford independent testimony too to the great change that had come over the attitude of schismatics towards Latins after 1645 or 1650: in Nakhchiwan, for instance, the two creeds had previously lived close neighbours for two or three centuries without notorious conflict.

Thus the Brief of 13.10.1668 (*Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 68, p. 89) used the words:

“. . . Having very frequently experienced the particular clemency and other regal “virtues of Your Highness in having those professing Our religion kindly treated, We “confidently now recommend to You all Christians living in Armenia, so that with the “renowned nobility of mind, with which You were wont to treat Pontifical business, You “may be pleased to afford all their” (i.e. of the local Christians) “affairs and interests the “protection of Your patronage especially against attacks and molestation by the “schismatics. . . .”

That of 19.10.1669 (*Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 68, p. 264) appealed for the Shah like his father to administer the district of Nakhchiwan direct and not farm it out to governors to exploit and be suborned by the money of the richer schismatics:

“. . . The father, of famous memory, of Your Highness granted to the Catholic “Armenians of the diocese of Nakhchiwan that they should enjoy a very wide measure of “freedom, even from government officials and governors whatsoever, and should be imme- “diately subject to the supreme jurisdiction of the sovereign. A privilege of this kind is “singularly necessary for maintaining their security and immunity from attacks by schis- “matics and other wicked men, We do not doubt but that Your Highness wishes to keep “it in force and inviolable for them, nay even We particularly beg that it be yet more estab- “lished by a fresh grant of Your clemency, and strengthened by it. . . .”

It was on account of Archbishop Matthew Hovannes of Nakhchiwan that on 25.10.1672 Pope Clement X once more took up the cudgels with his Brief (*Arch. Vat. Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 71, p. 52):

“Since there has come to Our ears the molestation which (Our) venerable brother, the “Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, has unjustly suffered at the hands of the chief of that province, “by whom he was put in chains and thrust into prison evidently because of the privileges “obtained from Your Highness for the Catholics, We have deemed it a duty of Our paternal “regard for him by this letter to ask You to be pleased to secure him for the future against “the attacks inflicted on him and on the dignity, with which he is invested, by the protection “of Your supreme authority, and to render Your very favours free from the insults of other “people.”