

“obtained orders” (from the Shah) “to be placed on the patriarchal throne at Echmiadzin, and for the deposition of the other patriarch, named Nahapiet: and on the 3rd inst.” (i.e. October 1696) “he left for his patriarchal church. All this business happened thus. Many Vartapets gathering in Armenia sent a petition to the Shah against Nahapiet, their patriarch, with the consent of many of the people in Armenia, and they dispatched to Isfahan a certain Azaria of Akuli, their procurator, together with a monk in order to get Nahapiet deposed by an order of the Shah and have someone made patriarch more worthy than he was. On his arrival at Isfahan he managed this business so skilfully that in a short time he obtained an order from the king for the deposition of the old patriarch and then—I do not know how—he got another royal decree for the Vartapet Stephen, Bishop of Julfa, to be appointed to the patriarchal see.

“The intention of Azaria (according to what he indicated to some of his friends) was to have appointed” (patriarch) “a certain Vartapet Isaac, Archbishop of S. Thaddeus, very noted and esteemed among the Armenians who call him ‘Artai Isaac’, which means ‘Isaac the Just’: and he is well inclined to the Franks, so that once, when he was” (sick) “in danger of his life in a monastery near Abranar, this Isaac received the Sacraments from our (Dominican) Fathers. But I do not know how Stephen has been made patriarch on the Shah’s order, only that to this end he spent a sum of 500 Tumans—more than 7,000 scudi. After that the king sent an order to the Khan of Erivan to imprison Nahapiet; but the Khan, having received the order while in Tabriz, put it into his pocket and then sent word to Nahapiet about everything, so that the latter might place himself in safety. The Khan continued his journey to Isfahan, where he had been summoned by the Shah to be made head of the arquebuse-men, intending to obtain from his Majesty the cancellation of the order. Nahapiet sent him some thousands of sequins with the promise of a larger sum, if he should succeed in being reappointed to his see. But the Khan, finding obstacles in other persons more powerful than himself, was unable to do anything of what he had wanted to do. So the order from the Shah remaining in favour of Stephen the Vartapet, on the occasion when the new Khan of Erivan, or rather his lieutenant, had to set out for his governorship, Stephen accompanied him, having first paid him 150 Tumans. . . .

“The people of Julfa are delighted at his departure, as they will now be free from his hands, because of a truth ‘hated of God and of men’ he was liked by very few, detested by many and feared by all. I wonder how fortunate this new dignity will prove for him! Many Vartapets and chief merchants in Armenia have written (as I have heard from persons deserving credence) fulminations to Azaria for having had made patriarch a man so unworthy of it. (According to what a Capuchin Father writes) they wonder whether, when Stephen has arrived in Armenia, they will be poisoned because, if they were not satisfied with Nahapiet, much less will they be with this one. Besides, the old patriarch has withdrawn from Echmiadzin and now in all tranquillity and not far away is performing all the offices of a patriarch. Before long this comedy must needs come to an end. . . .”

Six months later—April 1697¹—Bishop Elias goes on with the story:

“In this usurpation he (Stephen) was soon disturbed by claims and complaints made by Nahapiet and, after being bastinadoed, thrown into a tower.² There he remains imprisoned and due to pay a fine of 1,000 Tumans, i.e. about 15,000 scudi in compensation both for this and for all the other violent upheavals he had contrived in the past thirty years . . .³ by the just ordering of Divine providence the author of all the past troubles, Stephen, was arrested in Erivan and put in irons in a dark prison: he had been turned out of the patriarchate, into which he had intruded himself on the restoration of Nahapiet, whom he had

¹ Bp. Elias, 27.4.1697, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 186.

² See *S.N.R.*, II, p. 141. Nazar and Shariman, sons of Murad Shariman, from Venice wrote to the Card. Prefect news of the imprisonment of the Vartapet Stephen.

³ Bp. Elias, 15.9.1697, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 198.