

Success had come to the Carmelites and the Bishop in so far as residence in Julfa was concerned—the French Fr. Basil of S. Charles, 12.9.1697 (*S.N.R.*, II), wrote that he had been made Superior of the Residence in Julfa and had a school with many Armenians, where the teaching was altogether Catholic and well received; but the spite of the schismatic Armenians continued hardly unabated, as the following extracts illustrate:

“15.9.1697. . . . The passionate partisans of the Kalantar Lucas also do not desist from utilizing every opportunity to display their feelings of revenge: as, for instance, they did a few days ago over . . . a lawsuit of Khwajeh Gaspar Shariman, on which he has already had to spend about 150 Tumans, and it is feared that he will have to hand over as much again from the money of an orphan deposited with him to a man making an unjust claim to it, backed by a tyrannical bully, one of the royal eunuchs. . . .”¹

“9.3.1699. . . . At Tiflis in Georgia the Capuchin Fathers and the Catholics there are suffering severe persecution at the hands of the Armenians, stirred up against them by a Vartapet, who had been sent there on a visitation by Nahapiet. None of the Catholics there may go to the church of the Fathers, save under heavy monetary and personal penalties. Similarly at Hamadan, where Mgr Pidou, Bishop of Baghdad is, the Armenians have turned violently against the Catholics, especially against Ter Joseph, a secular priest, who had publicly made a profession of Faith in the chapel of Monseigneur, so that he had to run away. . . . The Armenians have obtained an order from the Khan there that no one may go to the church of the Bishop of Baghdad under pain of heavy monetary penalties, and they have had one of the chief men, who is a good Catholic, put in prison, according to what Monseigneur writes to me. . . .”²

“5.7.1700. The Capuchin Fathers in Tiflis, or Georgia, have again complained of the Armenians: the latter had told the governor of Tiflis many false things about them, and so that our Catholics were afraid to come to church. During the time of this Shah we cannot remain unmolested in this Persian mission, because, when the king has good intentions, the officials and governors do not fear him and so they take money from the Armenians, for the sake of which they molest our Catholics and Christians, if they do not the actual Fathers. . . .”³

The case regarding Gaspar Shariman is of some interest because it had a connection with the noted French writer on Persia, J. B. Tavernier, and was of some importance because of its effect on the plans of Bishop Elias: in one of his long reports to the Cardinals, when he was in Rome, 26.9.1702,⁴ he gives as one reason why he needed to visit Rome:

“the very severe oppression of our chief Catholics, who after more than 20 years of continued victimization at length by the malignity of a certain well-known Armenian sycophant were brought to the direst straits and together with their families and dependents were being compelled to abstain from frequenting our churches and schools and indeed from any communication with us.

“I shall briefly relate the case. This crafty person, first of all regarded at the court of the king of France as a Persian prince and, as such, as a convert to the Faith having been baptized with sumptuous solemnity, after a series of villainies of the same type cunningly perpetrated there during several years and afterwards in Germany, Sweden, Poland, Muscovy and Turkey, on returning to Persia with letters from certain Christian princes, in part clandestinely obtained and also in part forged in the name of the ‘Comte de Segli’, boasting himself to be an envoy extraordinary, made himself a Muhammadan at the frontier of the empire. By these devices therefore he was admitted to an audience of the king and to the ears of certain of the grantees and began to lay claim to a sum of 28,000 Tumans, i.e. more than 400,000 scudi, from the Messrs. Shariman, as being money due,

¹ Bishop Elias, 15.9.1697, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 198.

² Fr. John Bartholomew, O.P., 9.3.1699, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 232.

³ *S.N.R.*, II, p. 372, Prior Desterro of the Augustinians, Isfahan.

⁴ *S.N.R.*, II, p. 342.