

“As to Isfahan I can tell you that the warfare continues and at present only two claimants to the kingdom of Persia remain—one named Karim Khan, the other Hasan Khan: God grant that there be peace in this country, also between the Christian princes, because the war brings many trials with it. . . .”

When in the interval Muhammad Hasan Khan Qajar was murdered did not appear in the letters examined, but it was presumably about the beginning of 1760, for on 16.8.1760¹ in Aleppo Fr. Leopold Soldini, O.P., on his way East:

“had written” (this) “when there arrived sure news that Karim Khan, the new king of Persia, is in peaceful possession of the crown, so that trade is being reopened and the missionaries will be able to enter . . .”:

while by 8.11.1760² from Julfa itself Fr. Raymond Berselli, O.P., was able to tell the Sacra Congregation:

“. . . At present the country and roads are (in) good (order). Karim Khan Zand, who has *eight fine provinces* out of this vast empire, is a good prince, and rules well: he is well disposed towards his Christian subjects. May God preserve and prosper him! He is not at war with other chiefs, who hold the other provinces of this country. For the rest, very few Christians have remained in Julfa and the Catholics are only some 30 persons—poor people, who have been unable to run away and leave during these past disastrous years. There are always however here some petty traders, oriental Christians passing through” (i.e. Isfahan). . . .

Bishop Emmanuel³ of Baghdad had addressed to the Cardinal Prefect a letter, unfortunately lost or purloined on its way, unless unobserved by the compiler in his search—“in the beginning of March last” (i.e. 1763) “. . . a report on the complete victory which Karim Khan had over his competitors . . .”: whether, therefore, there was fresh fighting between 1758 and 1763 does not appear in this correspondence. Bishop Emmanuel went on to notify Rome that, when this complete victory was known in Baghdad:

“. . . a number of Persian and Armenian families, who had taken refuge in Baghdad for a long time past, made arrangements to return to their homes. On 16.4. (i.e. 1763) there arrived here from Aleppo . . . two Dominican Fathers, called Fr. Vincent Ferrer (Ricci) and Fr. John Baptist (de Bernardis) appointed to Isfahan . . . they could not have arrived in Baghdad in more favourable circumstances for reaching their destination. . . . The Fathers had all the time necessary to get ready for the journey and finally departed on 15.5. (1763), with a caravan, said to number more than 10,000!”

Two months later the same bishop had had from Fr. Raymond Berselli, O.P., a letter dated 18.4.1763,⁴ in which the Dominican Religious in Julfa had reported

‘all Persia, and Isfahan in particular, quiet, and well provided’ (with food) ‘thanks to the prudent rule of Karim Khan’.

Indeed the Father’s own words were:

“temporal affairs could not be going better than they are, but it is not the same with spiritual affairs”,

¹ *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 574.

³ *Idem*, VII, p. 211, his letter of 25.5.1763.

² *Idem*, p. 637.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 178.