

“view of the tranquillity brought in by Karim Khan, so greatly belauded, since he succeeded
 “in subduing divers collections of petty potentates, who were infesting the country and who
 “by their constant exactions and depredations crushed the remnant of that wretched
 “nation. Already very many Persians have returned there with their families, won over
 “partly by the invitations and promises of the Regent, partly on the ground of their religion
 “which, they being of that called the Shiah, they cannot openly profess in the countries
 “under Ottoman domination,¹ where the sect known as Sunni is followed and that of the
 “Persians regarded as heretical. This last time I was in Baghdad” (viz. 1771) “I saw
 “depart for Persia a caravan of about 10,000 persons—men, women, children—so that on
 “good grounds one can hope to see in a few years’ time that country re-populated and
 “restored to its pristine splendour, at least as regards the provinces subject to the rule of
 “Karim Khan, of which alone I am able to speak . . . although it is true that of the
 “Christians, who emigrated from Persia (very few of the poorest excepted) there has not
 “yet returned a single person of any standing, for the reason which I shall later on adduce.

“Instead of Isfahan, Karim Khan has established his capital in Shiraz, a town which
 “he has had fortified with wide moats, high walls, and bastions provided with good guns.
 “Besides the royal and magnificent palace he has erected there many other buildings of less
 “size for the lodging of the princes his brothers, and of his chief officials. In addition to
 “the heads of the tribes and towns who have submitted to him he keeps as hostages there
 “the sons and wives of the governors of the provinces as sureties for the fidelity of their
 “fathers and husbands, who however pay for it with their heads in case of any revolt.
 “They are all treated honourably, each according to his own rank and quality, without
 “however being allowed to go outside the gates of the town, which is guarded by a numerous
 “garrison of about 20,000 soldiers.

“ . . . The title of ‘Shah’ he allows to be given to a certain Isma’il,² a prince descended
 “by the mother’s side from the royal race of the Safawi. The prince in question is guarded
 “by orders of the Regent in a fort some days’ distance from Shiraz with every comfort and
 “means of amusement he can desire, but without being permitted to communicate with
 “persons other than those assigned him for his service, so that he is nothing else than a
 “nominal Shah: authority and command remain in the hands of the Regent, Karim
 “Khan. . . .

“ . . . The reasons advanced, then” (by the Catholic flock emigrated and scattered in
 other countries for not returning) “are:

- “(a) fear lest on the death of Karim Khan Persia relapse into its former disturbed
 “condition,
- “(b) the interruption of trade since the two Companies, the English and the Dutch, took
 “away their Factories and Residences from Persia,
- “(c) the removal of those who, together with their families, had taken refuge, some in
 “Venice and Amsterdam, some in Bengal, some in Madras and other regions of
 “India.

“But, as to the first reason, rather there is a hope that Persia under the rule of the present
 “Regent will be able to regain its former lustre, because of the liking that he (Karim Khan)
 “is increasingly winning from his subjects who, moved by esteem for the father and also for
 “his being of the same ‘Ali-ite creed³ as themselves, would prefer to see as successor to the
 “throne his son, a young prince of excellent disposition and inspiring great hopes—as he
 “is becoming generally acclaimed—the more so, if it turn out that the Regent, his father,
 “wishes to have him recognized in his own lifetime as his successor on the death of the above-
 “named Isma’il Shah, whom—as mentioned above—he allows meanwhile to bear the empty
 “title of Shah. If that were to happen, there is no doubt but that there would be re-
 “established in the country, on its former footing, the trade now suspended and that the

¹ Shiah worship in Mesopotamian towns must, then, have been surreptitious at this period.

² This Isma’il ‘Shah’, who had first dated his reign from 1749–52, had only temporarily been ‘dethroned’ by Azad Khan, Afghan, in 1756, then?

³ ‘Ali-ite = Shiah, from the Imam.