

“ . . . I do not doubt for a moment that the Sac. Congregation, so zealous for the propagation of the Faith, will try to . . . set up again those ancient, abandoned missions: and more than any other Religious institution it should, in my opinion, interest itself in that of the Discalced Carmelites: the missionary field of Persia had been specially assigned to Religious of that Order, as is to be seen from the Bulls of the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul V and Urban VIII, so much so that for the maintenance of those missions and for the seminarists sent out to them a sufficient capital sum was bequeathed by Baron Cimini, lord of Cacurri, in the kingdom of Naples: what is being done with the yield of the legacy must be known to the S. Congregation, which has the superintendence of it. . . .”

In specifying that, as a commencement in reopening, settlements might be made in four places in Persia, the Bishop of Isfahan put Julfa second:

“ . . . there is only one Dominican remaining and he, besides the house of his own Order, has under his charge the very fine house and gardens of the Jesuits, and that of the Discalced Carmelites. Now it seems to me not only opportune but also necessary, that at least the last-named should re-establish themselves in order to guide, aid and protect the two priests from Propaganda, who are in possession of the Catholic church of the Annunciation, called the Shariman church, which was founded by Mgr Elias, Bishop of Isfahan, by instituting the Vicar of the Discalced Carmelites as superintendent of that parish church, it being almost adjoining the Residence of the Carmelite Fathers. When the latter have returned to Julfa, it should be easy for them afterwards to recover as well the very fine and ancient Convent which they used to have in the neighbouring royal city of Isfahan, and which at present and for about 15 years past is and has been occupied by a Persian who says that he is a creditor of our Fathers for 25 Tumans (which in Roman money make 250 scudi)—although to tell the truth, as there has not remained a single European resident or any Christian in Isfahan, it seems to me that it would be better, when that House were recovered, to let it on rent, and from the proceeds have something for the benefit of the mission in Julfa. . . .”

As to Shiraz, which he put third, while recognizing that there were few Catholics dwelling there, but numbers visiting it on business with the Court, he considered that:

“it would always be a good thing that someone should be permanently with the Prince Regent—at least one of the missionaries—so as to be at hand . . . when necessary for the welfare and preservation of the other missions against attempts which the heretical Armenians, our enemies, are often wont to contrive. . . .”

While temporarily at Basra, on 13.6.1774, Mgr Charles of S. Conrad mentioned in a letter to Rome:¹

“ . . . Our church and Convent in Isfahan are in much better condition than those at Julfa by reason of the care given them by the Persian with whom they were mortgaged for 25 Tumans = 125 Turkish sequins or 400 piastres, at 9 per cent. He gets the interest on that money out of the garden adjoining the convent, so that according to what the Armenian traders recently arrived” (in Basra) “tell me, if the Persian were to be given the capital sum, he would hand back the church and convent. . . .”

¹ *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi*, No. 34. The same Carmelite prelate, writing 13.11.1774 (*S.R. nei Congressi*, 34, p. 264) made the note, interesting for modern comparisons, regarding his sailing from Basra to Bombay:

“ . . . for the passage alone, with accommodation in a small cabin, I had to pay 160 piastres, and for service and provisions, which I had to get afresh at Masqat, piastres 68, which altogether make the sum of 228 piastres from Basra to Bombay. After 10 days' stay in the port of Masqat we left on 2.10.1774 for Bombay, and after a very prosperous voyage . . . at one hour after nightfall on 18.10.1774 I arrived in that island . . .” (i.e. 16 days' sailing from Masqat to Bombay).