



GOUVEA, ANTONIO DE

GOUVEA, ANTONIO DE (b. Beja, Portugal, 1575; d. Manzanares, Spain, 1628), Augustinian missionary and Portuguese envoy who visited Persia three times between 1602 and 1613 and who wrote on Persia.

De Gouvea first visited Persia in 1602 on the order of the archbishop of Goa, Aleixo de Menzes, who had convinced the Portuguese viceroy of Goa to dispatch an Augustinian mission to deliver a letter from King Philip III to Shah 'Abbās I (q.v.; 996-1038/1588-1629). This letter, written in response to the embassy of Anthony Sherley and Ḥosayn 'Ali Beg that the Shah had sent to Europe in 1599, was designed to convince the Safavid ruler of the seriousness of the European intention to fight the Ottomans.

Traveling with two other Augustinians, Jeronimo da Cruz and Cristovão do Espirito Santo, de Gouvea left Goa in February 1602 and landed in Hormuz (q.v.) two months later. He traveled to Yazd via Lār and Shiraz, and from there to Mašhad to meet Shah 'Abbās, who was in Khorasan fighting the Uzbeks. Gouvea relates how in their meeting the shah had expressed his favorable opinion of the Christian countries and his loathing of the Turks (de Gouvea, 1606, p. 133a). The Portuguese delegates subsequently traveled to Isfahan in the company of the shah, arriving on 10 November. De Gouvea notes that, following their arrival in the capital, the shah became noticeably cooler towards him, either because the news had meanwhile broken that the Portuguese were about to appear before Hormuz with the intent of capturing Bahrain or because of clerical agitation against the Augustinian request to build a church in Isfahan. The Shah nonetheless granted the missionaries



permission to erect a church and a house, but was evasive in his responses to their other requests. It is unlikely that the shah's decision to resume the war with the Ottomans was in any way influenced by his conversations with de Gouvea, as the latter claimed and as some modern scholars believe (Hartmann, p.193), for it appears that the decision was taken only after de Gouvea's departure for Hormuz in February 1603 (Steensgaard, p. 235).

De Gouvea left Isfahan accompanied by a Persian envoy, Allāhverdi Beg, intent on setting sail for India. He arrived in Hormuz on 1 April but, having missed his connection to Goa, turned inland again and went to Shiraz. Following unsuccessful attempts to convince the Persians to restore Bahrain to the Portuguese, de Gouvea left Persia. On his arrival in Goa, he wrote the preface to what would become his first written report on Persia, the *Jornada* (Gulbenkian, 1972, p. 15, n. 5; 1974, p. 212). The *Jornada* was published in 1606, by which time de Gouvea felt that he knew much more about Persia than when he left the country in 1603, having meanwhile read the informative letters of Augustinian friars such as Belchior dos Anjos and Guilherme de Santo Agostinho, who had visited the Safavid realm in 1604-5.

In 1608, de Gouvea was sent again to the Safavid court, charged with the establishment of a permanent Augustinian mission in Isfahan. He also carried a letter from the king of Spain praising the shah for his victories against the Turks, but critical of his taking of Bahrain from the khan of Hormuz, an ally of the Portuguese (*Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 166). Much of the text of the *Relaçam* was written during this second sojourn in Persia. Angry at the Spanish failure to wage war on the Ottomans and displeased with the Augustinian friar's personal behavior, Shah 'Abbās was cool in his reception of de Gouvea. Nevertheless, in late 1609, he sent de Gouvea to Spain and Rome with the task of persuading the European powers to act against the Turks. With him traveled a Persian merchant-envoy, Dengiz Beg Rumlu, who carried 100 bales of silk with him. Having made arrangements to have the *Relaçam* published in Lisbon upon arrival in Portugal, de Gouvea reached Madrid in early 1611. There he conveyed the Safavid proposal that the Spanish send representatives to Hormuz where they would be able to buy all the silk that the Safavid ruler was in the habit of sending to Europe via Ottoman territory. The hundred bales of silk would give rise to a great deal of misunderstanding, for after Dengiz Beg had sold more than half for his own gain, de Gouvea proceeded to offer the remaining bales to the Spanish king as a gift rather than as a sample of the merchandise that the Persians intended to deliver in the



future. At the behest of Dengiz Beg, who conveyed the shah's desire to see Gouvea appointed Catholic bishop for the Armenians of Jolfā, the Spanish king persuaded the pope to elevate de Gouvea to the rank of bishop of Cyrene and Apostolic vicar of the Armenians of Isfahan (*Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 202-3; Florencio de Niño Jesús, pp. 88-95).

Upon his return to Persia in 1613, Dengiz Beg was executed, perhaps for his part in the bales of silk affair, although there are different explanations in later accounts (Eskandar Beg, pp. 862-23; Eskandar Beg, tr. Savory, p. 1075). De Gouvea, who arrived somewhat later in Isfahan, defended his own role by arguing that the Spanish king was not a merchant and that the gift sent by Philip III made up for the value of the silk. Upon evaluation by the Persians, this was found to be untrue, and de Gouvea was asked to reimburse the Persian court for the difference. He thereupon quickly left for the coast, ostensibly to meet the next Spanish ambassador, Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa (q.v.).

De Gouvea's first book, the *Jornada*, is only concerned with Persia and the author's mission to the shah's court in the last chapter—which also includes the text of Shah 'Abbās' letter to King Philip III. The *Relaçam*, by contrast, deals exclusively with Persia, though a large part of it is devoted to the country's Armenian inhabitants and the prospect of their conversion to Catholicism. In addition to borrowing from letters by Fathers Belchior dos Anjos and Guilherme de Santo Agostinho, the *Relaçam* is said to have been inspired by two letters written by P. P. Diego de S. Anna (which have now been published in Alonso, 1961, p. 155). Pietro Della Valle (q.v.) was rather critical of the *Relaçam*, mentioning the rumor that the second part—which was in the process of being published as he, Della Valle, wrote his own narrative—contained information at variance with the contents of the first part (Della Valle, II, p. 17-18). On the other hand, De Gouvea is said to have known Persian well (Melchior de Los Angeles, p. 609) and, as C. Alonso notes, de Gouvea's work ranks as the best documented European source on Persia for the first decade of the seventeenth century (Alonso, 1961, p. 155).

De Gouvea's *Relaçam* consists of three parts. The first, which relates the events that occurred during his embassy contains information on such sundry topics as the Jews of Lār, the shah's views on justice and the economy as well as his personal demeanor, and a description of the 'Ašura' (q.v.) procession in Shiraz. The second part includes extensive reporting on the Safavid-Ottoman wars, with sections on the shah's retaking of Tabriz, Marand, Jolfā, Naḵjavān



(Nakhichevan) and Baku as well as the siege of Erevan. It also offers good information on military matters, including the strength of armies. The third part is devoted to Persia's Armenian population, with special attention to their relationship with the Augustinian fathers and the Church of Rome. A most valuable section contains an evocative description of the forced migration of the Armenians of (Old) Jolfā to the newly built suburb of Isfahan, which occurred shortly after de Gouvea had completed his first journey to Persia.

De Gouvea was long thought to have been the author of another treatise on Persia, published anonymously, the *Breve Relaçam d'albumas cousas Mais notaveis que os Religiosos de Sancto Agostinho fizeram na Persia em serviço da Sancta Igreja Romana, & de Sua Magestade ate o Anno passado de 1607* (Lisbon, 1609), but this has been demonstrated to be untrue by Roberto Gulbenkian (1974, pp. 218 -21).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

C. Alonso, "Due lettere riguardanti i primi tempi delle missioni agostiniane in Persia," *Analecta Augustiniana* 24, 1961, pp. 152-201.

Idem, "La embajada persa de Denguiz-Beg y Antonio de Gouvea, osa, a la luz de nuevos documentos," *Archivo Agustiniiano* 64, 1980, pp. 49-115.

Idem, "El P. Antonio de Gouvea O.S.A. y la embajada persa de Dengiz Beg (1609-1612)," *Analecta Augustiniana* 38, 1975, pp. 63-94.

A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the papal Mission of the XVII and XVIIIth Centuries, ed. H. Chick, 2 vols., London, 1939.

Pietro Della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle, il Pellegrino*, ed. G. Gancia, 2 vols., Brighton, U.K., 1843.

Fr. Florencio del Niño Jesús, *A Persia*, vol. III, (1608-1624) *Su fundación—Sus embajadas—Su apostolado*, Pamplona, 1930.



António de Gouvea, *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Aleixo de Meneses Primaz da India Oriental Religioso da Ordem de S. Agostinho. Quando foy as Serras de Malawar & lugares en que morão os antigos Christãos de S. Thome, & os tirou de muytos erros, & heresias em que estavam, & reduziu a nossa Fe Catholica & obediencia de Santa Igreja romana da qual passava de mil annos que estavam apartados, recopilada de diversos tratados de pessoas de autoridade que a tudo foram presentes, por Frey Antonio Gouvea, Coimbra, 1606; tr. F. J. de Glen as *Histoire Oriental des grans progrès de l'Eglise Cath. Apost. et Rom. En la Réduction des anciens Chrestiens, dits de S. Thomas, de plusieurs autres Squismatiques et Hérétiques à l'Union de la vraye Elgise: conversion encore des Mahométanes, Mores & Payens, pas les bons devoirs de Rome & illustre Sr. Don Alexis de Ménèsès, de l'Ordre des Ermites de S. Augustin, Archeveque de Goa et Primat en tout Orient*, Brussels, 1609.*

Idem, *Relaçam em que se tratam as guerras e grandes vitórias que alcançou o grande Rey de Persia Xá Abbas, do grão Turco Mahometo, e seu filho Amethe as quaes resultarão das Embaxadas que por mandado da Catholica Real Majestade de Rey D. Felipe II de Portugal fizerão alguns Religiosas da Ordem dos Ermitas de Santo Agostinho à Persia*, Lisbon, 1611; tr. A. de Meneses as *Relation des grandes guerres et victoires obtenues par le roy de Perse Cha Abbas contre les empereurs de Turquie Mahomet et Achmet son fils, ensuite du voyage de quelques religieux de l'ordre des Hermites de Saint-Augustin envoyés en Perse par le Roy catholique Don Philippe second roy de Portugal*, Rouen, 1646.

Roberto Gulbenkian, *L'Ambassade en Perse de Luis Pereira de Lacerda et des Pères Portugais de l'Ordre de Saint-Augustin, Belchior os Anjos et Guilherme de Santo Agostinho 1604-1605*, Lisbon, 1972.

Idem, "O Padre António de Gouveia e a autoria da "Breve Relaçam" de 1609 sobre a Pérsia," *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Portugues* 8, 1974, pp. 211-63.

Idem, "Relações religiosas entre os Arménios e os Agostinhos portugueses na Pérsia no século XVII," *Anais*, 2nd Ser. 37, 1998, pp. 305-52.

A. Hartmann, "William of St. Augustine and His Time," *Augustiana* 20/3-4, 1970, pp. 181-34, 581-636.

Padre Melchor de Los Angeles, "De itinere Augustianorum in Persidem," in Hartman, pp. 603-28.

Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The*



East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade, Chicago, 1974.