Encyclopædia Iranica

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Published: December 15, 2008
Last Updated: June 23, 2015

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JESUITS IN SAFAVID PERSIA. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus were the first European missionaries to enter the Persian Gulf in the 16th century. Their pioneer was the Dutchman Gaspar Barzaeus (Berze, 1515-53) who was selected for this task by Franciscus Xavier (1506-52), the founder of the Jesuit mission in Goa, India. Arriving in Hormuz (q.v.) in 1549, Barzaeus wrote extensive reports from the island in the following year (Garcia; Wicki, I, pp. 595-698; Rego, IV, pp. 373-417; Schurhammer, 1963-73, II/2, pp. 291-96). During their stay on the island, Barzaeus and his men operated in freedom, enjoying the tolerant religious climate of Hormuz. The Portuguese missionaries engaged the resident Jews in religious disputation (Rego, IV, pp. 403-5; Schurhammer, 1933, pp. 279-309). Barzaeus baptized many Muslims, including, according to rumor, Turān Shah, the nominal ruler of the island. He also managed to convert some high-ranking figures, among them the wife and daughter of a Safavid envoy passing through Hormoz *en route* to India. His own intolerant behavior, meanwhile, manifested itself in attempts to ban Jews from Hormuz and to convert mosques to churches, thus risking the wrath of Shah Ṭahmāsp I (r. 1524-76) and the local population (Trigault; Wicki, II, pp. 87-88; Schurhammer, 1963-73, II/3, pp. 409-24; Posch, pp. 78-79, 446-48). The presence of the Jesuits on the island did not lead to further activities on the mainland, however. Faced with an insufferable climate and a populace, whose overall lack of receptivity to their proselytizing did perhaps not suit their purposeful approach, they left Hormuz in 1568.

Only decades later did the Jesuits reenter Persia. From their base in Mughal

India, they volunteered to be the first Christian missionaries to go to Isfahan. This followed the news, conveyed by an ex-Jesuit monk by the name of Francisco da Costa who visited Persia on his way back from India in 1599, that Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 1587-1629, q.v.) was ready to convert to the Christian faith and would be willing to allow Christian friars into his territory. Yet the Portuguese viceroy of India chose the Augustinians to organize the next mission on account of their perceived experience in the various missions that they had established in the Persian Gulf, and because the archbishop of Goa offered to pay for the expenses. The Jesuits thus ended up being latecomers to sustained European missionary activity in Persia (Alonso, pp. 250-51).

Unlike the Jesuits and the Augustinians based in Goa, who acted within the jurisdictional framework of the *Padroado* (lit. 'patronage') according to which the Portuguese crown oversaw and funded the overseas dioceses, the activities of the Jesuits operating in Persia took place under other religious and political jurisdictions—most notably those of the Propaganda Fide, established in Rome in 1622, of the French Société des Missions Étrangères, founded in 1658, and of the crowns of France and Poland. Led by French and Polish representatives, their efforts to establish a presence in the country took place in the context of these countries' diplomatic overtures, which themselves trailed those of other European nations. Only in 1642, about forty years after the Augustinians had established themselves in Isfahan, did the Jesuits make preparations to branch out to Persia. The initiative originated in Aleppo, where French Jesuits had arrived in 1625. Its aim was to establish a base on the land route between Near East, India, and China and to be able to work among the Armenians of New Julfa (see JULFA; Richard, 2005-6, p. 7). The original suggestion came from the Bishop of Babylon, Monseigneur Bernard, during a stop in Aleppo while traveling to France. Msgr. Bernard's choice to lead the mission was Aimé Chézaud (1604-64), resident Jesuit in Aleppo who was familiar with that city's many Muslim and Armenian-Persian merchants, but the person who was eventually entrusted with the task was another Frenchman, François Rigordi (1609-79).

Rigordi arrived in Isfahan in early 1646, carrying a recommendation from a Polish ambassador by the name of Jerzy Ilicz who himself was to arrive in Persia shortly. However, Rigordi's initial stay was brief. Arriving as he did in the midst of an episode of anti-Christian measures, taken by the newly acceded grand vizier Ḵalifa Solṭān (1592/93-1654), and faced with resistance and the difficulty of finding housing, Rigordi embarked for India within weeks

after arriving. He returned to Isfahan a year later and, with the assistance of the prior of the resident Carmelites, in the fall of 1647 he obtained a decree from Shah ʿAbbās II (r. 1642-66, q.v.) allowing the acquisition of land and the construction of a house in the Safavid capital. It is likely that his promise to seek French assistance and commercial advantage played a role in this success (Rigordi, pp. 32-35; Zimmel, 1969, p. 7).

Rigordi thereupon left Persia, reaching Vienna and Rome via Russia and Poland to report about his achievements and to consult about subsequent initiatives. Eventually he went to France which henceforth became the center of the efforts to establish a Jesuit mission in Isfahan on account of the country's presumed influence in Persia. Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660), the famous prior of the Jesuit mission in China and Vietnam until his forcible departure from East Asia, was to be the leading figure in the next phase. It was probably he who first suggested the advantages of Isfahan as a relay station for mail going between Europe and Asia without Portuguese interference, and also as a launching pad for further forays into Central Asia and as far as China (Zimmel, 1969, p. 10; Idem, 1970, p. 884).

Although De Rhodes was commissioned to lead the next mission, it was Father Chézaud who initially went to Persia as his deputy, accompanied by Rigordi. Arriving in 1652, they were at first housed by the resident Carmelites (Raphaël, pp. 210-11; Wilson, pp. 686-87). In the fall of 1653 Rigordi, having traveled to the royal camp in Khorasan, managed to obtain a decree from Shah ʿAbbās II for the establishment of a Jesuit mission in Isfahan and Shiraz. This swift success was, in part, due to the letters of recommendation from the French King, which Rigordi carried, and grandiose promises of French assistance against the Ottomans and other enemies of Persia, which included the prospect of a French assault on Istanbul, of a siege of Surat, and French help with the ouster of the Dutch from Bandar ʿAbbās (Zimmel, 1969, pp. 5-7). As a result, he obtained royal permission for the Jesuits to establish themselves in New Jolfa, Tabriz, and Shiraz (Raphaël, pp. 211-12).

In the short run nothing came out of the venture because of vehement resistance on the part of the Armenians of New Julfa, and more specifically the bishop of the borough's Armenians, who resisted the influx of missionaries into his town for fear that their activities might create divisions in the Armenian community, and who thus sent petitions to the court arguing that the missionaries had come to convert Muslims to Christianity, forcing Chézaud's host, the *kalāntar* ('mayor') of New Julfa, to evict him. These

complaints led Moḥammad Beg, the newly appointed grand-vizier, to write to the shah with the request to forbid the Jesuits from establishing themselves in New Julfa until Rigordi's promises and commitments had been met. The result of this pressure was that all missionaries were expelled from Julfa in 1654 (Richard, 1995, II, pp. 215-18). The same circumstances prompted the dispatch of Bernhard Diestel (1623-60)—a young Austrian Jesuit born in Croatia who had joined the mission in Isfahan in 1654—to Poland in order to persuade that country's king to threaten the resident Armenian community with retaliation if the pressure on the Jesuits in Isfahan was not lifted. Before going to Poland, Diestel first went to Rome, where his briefings prompted attempts to reach China via Persia and Central Asia so as to avoid the long maritime journey. In 1656-57 Diestel would lead the first, failed attempt to reach China via this route in early modern times (Zimmel, 1970, pp. 880-88).

The follow-up mission, designed to solidify the creation of a permanent presence in Persia, was again led by De Rhodes. Arriving in Isfahan in late 1656, he and his fellow Jesuits were received in audience by Shah ʿAbbās II, but they did not manage to hand over to the ruler a letter containing a request for a house. The disappointing response De Rhodes brought from France with regard to the promises made by Rigordi created friction and led to frustration as well, and this proved to be a hindrance to a quick implementation of the promise of a convent (Zimmel, 1969, p. 7).

De Rhodes died in 1660 and was succeeded as the superior of the mission by Chézaud. Despite the ill will generated by the broken promises of the French among Persia's officials, Chézaud gained the admiration and even friendship and protection of Moḥammad Beg, the incumbent grand vizier in 1654-61. It was with Moḥammad Beg's assistance and at the latter's recommendation to the shah that Chézaud eventually secured a residence in Isfahan, located near the royal palace (Wilson, pp. 689-705; Zimmel, 1969, pp. 22-24). His erudition, his interest in Persian literature, and his eagerness to engage in religious disputes may have played a role in the good will he created. Having mastered Arabic in Aleppo, Chézaud became proficient in Persian, although not well enough to hold his own in disputations with Shiʿite ulema. He seems to have compiled a Persian dictionary, which now appears to have been lost. Newly discovered manuscripts show that he is also the author of a treatise entitled *Masḥ-e Meṣqal-e ṣafā-ye Āʾina-ye ḥaqqnemā*. Written in the context of the Muslim-Christian controversy provoked in the Islamic world by the missionary presence, this treatise aimed to rebut the *Meṣqal-e Ṣafāʾ dar tajliya-*

ye Āʾina-ye haqqnemā, a work of Sayyed Aḥmad b. Zeyn-al-ʿĀbedin ʿAlawi (d. between 1644 and 1650, q.v.), cousin and disciple of Mir Dāmād (d. 1631, see DĀMĀD), in refutation of Christianity, which itself had been written in response to *The Abridgement of the Truth-Revealing Mirror* (*Montaḵab-e Āʾina-ye ḥaqqnemā*), a work written in 1609 by Father Jeronimo Xavier S.J. of India which had been sent to Persia and presented to Shah ʿAbbās I on behalf of the Emperor Jahāngir (r. 1605-27, q.v.; see Richard, 2005-6, pp. 10-18).

Chézaud's other achievement was the founding of a residence in New Julfa. Sometime between 1659 and 1661, upon realizing that his activities in Isfahan proper were futile, Chézaud is said to have sold the house there and moved the mission to New Julfa, where he built a spacious new residence. In 1662 a chapel was consecrated as well; in 1691 it was to be enlarged with the financial assistance of the Catholic-Armenian Shahrimanian family (see SCERIMAN FAMILY at *iranica.com*), so that at the time of Chézaud's death in 1664 the Jesuit mission was in operation. Although we lack specific details, it seems that, at least in the beginning, the endeavor was sponsored by the Polish crown, and in particular by a fund donated by the Polish King John II Casimir (r. 1648-68, d. 1672, himself a Jesuit until he mounted the throne and after he abdicated), and his wife, Queen Marie Louise de Gonzaga-Nevers, who, because of her contributions, was given the honorific title of the founder of the Jesuit missions in Persia (Richard, 1995, II, p. 210). Polish funding may have dried up, for in 1674 it is reported that the Jesuits of Isfahan received a meager allowance of only 90 Spanish reals, which was sent to them from France (Bembo, p. 358).

Chézaud's successor as head of the Jesuit mission in Isfahan was Claude-Ignace Mercier, who arrived in Isfahan in the early summer of 1664, a few months before Chézaud's death. He founded a school for Armenian children as part of the Jesuit compound. Mercier died in 1674 and was succeeded by Jean-Baptiste de la Maze (1624-1709) who had arrived with Mercier and who was to reside in Julfa for the next twenty-five years. He served as the head of the Jesuit mission from 1676 to 1683, when he was succeeded by Father Roux, and held the position again in 1686-1689. De la Maze knew Armenian so well that he lectured in that language to young Armenians (Petis Fils, p. 127; Villotte, pp. 92-96).

The Julfa compound survived the scheming of schismatic Armenians against the missionaries, which in the summer of 1694 led to the expulsion of the Carmelites from New Julfa (Kroell, p. 78). In fact, in subsequent years the Jesuit

church in town was the only one allowed to use church bells. By 1700, the Jesuit school taught French, Latin, and Armenian to over one hundred children of local Armenians and resident Europeans. Despite the enthusiasm, industriousness, and perseverance of the fathers, however, they did not make much headway aside from baptizing an unspecified number of young children just before death at the request of their Muslim parents. Even among the Armenian population, their success was limited. In 1658 only six Catholic families were counted among the Armenians of New Julfa.

By the late 17th century the Jesuit field of activity had spread to Shirvan and Armenia as well, where missions were founded in Yerevan, Shemakha (Šemāḵi), and Ganja. The Yerevan mission came into being as a result of a mission led by Fathers Longeau and Potier, who in 1683 arrived in Isfahan with letters from the French King Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715), requesting permission to establish a mission in Armenia, and who in the following year moved to Yerevan. Located in a suburb of the city, the convent they founded by 1700 consisted of two clerics and one layman, and subsisted on manufacturing wine and on a small annual stipend from the French King (Schillinger, pp. 118-22).

We are better informed about the Shemakha mission, which was chosen because of the Jesuits' perception of the poor state of the Armenians and because Shemakha served as a crossroads of various nationalities and the passageway from Russia and Poland. The Polish contribution was crucial in the founding and administering of this mission and occurred in the double context of trying to find an alternative route to China other than via Siberia, and Polish attempts to lure the Safavids into an anti-Ottoman alliance. The mission resulted from a diplomatic mission by Count Constantin Salomon Siri Zagorski, an Armenian who had been made nobleman in Poland, who in 1686 was sent to Persia as representative of King Jan Sobieski III (r. 1674-96) with the task of probing the shah's interest in joining the European powers in their anti-Ottoman struggle. Having obtained permission from Shah Solaymān I (r. as Ṣafi II in 1666-68, re-enthroned as Solaymān I in 1668 and reigned until 1694) to establish a Jesuit convent in Shemakha, he returned in the company of the French Jesuit Potier, arriving in Shemakha in the middle of 1686. A year later, Potier was killed by the owner of the house he had rented, and De la Maze was sent as his successor (Monier, pp. 44-48). De la Maze would remain in Shemakha until his death in 1709 (De Pradel de Lamase, pp. 251-60). In 1693 or 1694 he wrote an interesting account of conditions in that town as well as in

Baku and environs (ARSI, Gall. 97II). He also left a journal of a journey he made from Shemakha to Isfahan in 1698 (De la Maze, pp. 43-90). It is not clear how much he achieved as a missionary, spending much of his time alone in Shemakha. Like all missionaries he was faced with fierce opposition from Schismatic Armenians who actively resisted the catholic missionaries in the northwestern regions of Persia as well. There are also reports about the deterioration of government control in this period, as a result of which the Jesuit Fathers of Shemakha were exposed to popular harassment (De Bruyn, p. 434). After De la Maze's death in 1709, Father Bachoud took over as superior in Shemakha. The city suffered terribly in the last decade of Safavid rule, although the Jesuit convent seems to have been largely spared in the depredations caused by the Lezghi invaders in 1721.

The mission in Ganja came into being as a result of the activities of the Polish Jesuit Ignatius Zapolski, who accompanied Zagorski on the latter's next trip to Persia and who took over from him as Polish ambassador after Zagorski's violent death in 1689. Zapolski's attempts to create new facilities for the Jesuits included a desire to establish a house in Ganja. Shortly before his death in 1703, he obtained a *raqam* ('royal permit') from Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn (r. 1694-1722) authorizing the establishment of a Jesuit convent in Ganja. He died in Sāva, on his way to Ganja, and was succeeded as superior of the new mission by Jan Reuth (AME 354, letter of 18 October 1711, fol. 368; Krzyszkowski, pp. 114, 116).

A total of thirty Polish Jesuits active in Persia in the 17th and 18th centuries have been identified. These include, other than those already mentioned, Michal Wierzkzorkowski, Pawel Wrocyński, Andrzej Zielonacki, and Aleksander Kulesza, who worked mainly among Armenians in Shemakha and Ganja. All of them labored under great financial difficulties, tending to plague victims and seeking to end slaving practices and to found envisioned educational projects, but plans for this were cut short owing to rebellion, and they returned to Isfahan where they never managed to establish an independent seminary (Bednarz, pp. 379-82; Pucko, pp. 310-11). The best known of the Polish Jesuits active in Iran was Father Judasz Thaddeus Krusinksi (1675-1756, q.v.), who resided in Persia between 1707 and 1728 and again in the 1740s, and who served the crown as court translator and acted as intermediary between the Papacy and the Safavid court until after 1722.

Little is known about Jesuit activities in Persia following the fall of the Safavids. The Jesuit mission in Isfahan would continue to operate until 1755,

and five years later the last Jesuits are said to have left Gilan (Anon., *A Chronicle*, pp. 703-5).

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