

PERSIAN KNIGHTS IN SPAIN: EMBASSIES AND CONVERSION PROCESSES

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Introduction

THE Spanish Monarchy was aware of the importance of a Persian alliance in its struggle with the Moors of Granada for the sake of reconquering the Iberian Peninsula. Thus in 1501, Philip I dispatched the Milanese Pedro Mártir de Anglería to Alexandria and Babilonia (Cairo) on a diplomatic mission. This mission bore a certain resemblance to the dispatch a hundred years earlier by Henry III of the Madrid gentleman, González de Clavijo, to the court of Timur, conqueror of the Turks, who was to become a legendary figure at the beginning of the sixteenth century¹. On the other hand, the Spanish authorities were also mindful of what had become of a Spanish doctor of Jewish belief named Isaac, who had come to Europe as ambassador of Persia in 1472, perhaps as a result of the diplomatic mission of the Venetians Zeno, Barbaro and Contarini who had come to the court of Uzun Hasan in 1470. Isaac arrived in Rome to be converted to Catholicism together with two other Persian nobles, and was to be baptised by Pope Sixtus IV. The episode was to be immortalised by

¹ This contribution is part of the project *Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, PN, HAR2012-36884-C02-01/01*. I appreciate the English translation of this essay by Prof Michael White and the remarks made by Rudi Matthee. This fame increased when Clavijo was buried in the church of St. Francis in Madrid in 1573 and especially following the publication of his journey in Seville in 1582 by Argote de Molina. The Castilians came to admire Tamerlane as the anti-Turkish hero who in 1402 had defeated and captured the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid. Consequently, important chroniclers such as Paolo Giovio, Pedro Mexía, Juan de Mariana and even distinguished dramatists such as Miguel de Cervantes, Lopez de Guevara y Lope de Vega, as also the ambassador García de Silva y Figueroa, sent to Persia in 1614, made reference to Tamerlane as a model personage who heralded an alliance with the new Safavid dynasty. See Francisco López Estrada, 'Fama de Tamorlan en la España de los Siglos de Oro', in Artaza, Elena *et al.* (coords.), *Estudios de filología y retórica en homenaje a Luisa López Grigera*, Bilbao 2000, 303-10; Francisco López Estrada, 'Fama literaria de Tamorlan en España durante el siglo xv', in Leonardo Funes and José Luis Moure (eds.), *Studia in honorem Germán Orduna*, Alcalá de Henares 2001, 369-74; Rafael González Cañal, 'Las comedias sobre el Gran Tamorlán de Persia', in Anthony Disney (ed.), *Historiography of Europeans in Africa and Asia, 1450-1800*, Farnham UK and Burlington VT 1995.



Pierro della Francesca in his famous painting of The Baptism of Christ. The new convert was given the name Sixtus of Persia². This mission was recalled in the seventeenth century by Juan Agustín de Funes in his history of the Order of Saint John where he relates how the Persian emissary arrived at Rhodes and reviewed the formation of the ships in Persian service³. The Catholic monarchs were under the impression that the Moors of Granada might also be susceptible to conversion. This prompted them to undertake a serious study of the way to approach the issue of conversion. To this end, a series of treatises was drawn up, the most important being that by Juan Luis Vives in 1540 – a dialogue between a *faqih* (a Muslim jurist) and a Christian using the Koran as the basis for the discussion⁴.

Anglería's mission appears in his *Legatio Babilonica*, a work from the hand of the court chronicler, printed, together with other works of his, in Seville in 1511 and reprinted twice in Alcalá, in 1516 and 1530. His aim was to ensure that the Mamluk Sultan Kansu el-Ghuri would not adopt measures against Christian pilgrims as a reprisal for the persecution of the Granada Moriscos. The diplomatic mission was considered a success and in 1502 Isabel and Fernando wrote letters to the sultan thanking him for his treatment of their ambassador⁵.

The early Spanish humanists meanwhile reacted with great enthusiasm to the interest at the court that was evolving regarding the new sophy – Shah Isma`il, who in 1501 came to power as the head of the Safavid order and the founder of their state. Thus, Pedro Mártir tells us that he spoke to his friend Pedro Fajardo about Persia on several occasions. While in Alexandria, Mártir attempted to find out everything possible regarding the new shah, and once back in the court he spread the news that the sophy might possibly become a catholic. In 1509, he informed the court that the pope had written to the Grand Master of Rhodes assuring him that the sophy would become a Christian⁶.

² G. Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, Turin 1865. 'l'Ambassador de Persia è stà battezzato a Roma da Papa Sisto, insieme con due famigli: e ghe è stà messo nome Sisto, dal nome del Papa, el qual con tutti i Cardenali e tutta la corte, l'ha presentà dei gran doni e molto richi'. A. M. Piemontese, 'L'ambasciatore di Persia presso Federico da Montefeltro, Ludovico Bonon-isense O.F.M. e il cardinal Bessarione', in *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae*, 11 (2004), 539-65.

³ J.A. de Funes, *Coronica de ... de San Juan*. 'Knowing in the Armada that there had arrived in Rhodes an ambassador from Uzun Hasan, king of Persia, who together with Catarino Zeno and Joseph Barbaro had come to all the Christian princes beseeching them to supply the Persians with artillery and the necessary provisions to conquer cities from the Turks, the common enemy, our captains with the whole armada went to Rhodes where they were received with great majesty and pomp by the Grand Master. Celebrating with the Persian ambassador the league organised by Uzun Hasan, the Pope and the Venetians, they displayed the whole armada in battle formation flying banners and flags. At such a sight, the ambassador and the Persian nobles who accompanied him greatly rejoiced and, to please the Persians still more, they all offered themselves to the service of his king'. See Nicolas Vatin, *L'Ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Jérusalem, l'Empire ottoman et la Méditerranée orientale entre les deux siècles de Rhodes: 1480-1522*, Paris 1994.

⁴ Isabelle Poutrin, *Convertir les musulmans. Espagne, 1491-1609*, Paris 2012.

⁵ AGS. Libros de Cédulas, 6, 46. Isabel to Soldán, Alcalá, 9 February 1503, in similar fashion Ferdinand and others addressed letters to the Guardian of Jerusalem and the Grand Master of Rhodes.

⁶ Pedro Mártir de Anglería, *Epistolario*, II.



This information could well have reached the humanists of the time, particularly Thomas More, who had the protagonist of his famous *Utopia* undertake an important journey to Persia. He may have been influenced by Xenophon, but it is quite possible that he also had access to the recent travel literature on Europeans in Persia. More claimed that Utopianese was the Persian language. His interest in the Orient also comes through in the translation into English undertaken by his son John of the treatise of the Portuguese, Damián de Goes, on the diplomatic embassy of Prester John to Portugal⁷. This idea was later to take root in Spain where in 1682, the *Descripción de la Sinapia, península en la Tierra Austral* presents the utopia of Sinapia whose inhabitants were Persian Christians⁸.

There already had been an important precedent when Calixtus II, initially, and later Pius II sent the Franciscan Luis Severi of Bologna as nuncio to the Persian ruler Uzun Hasan (r. 1453-78) to bolster a crusade against the Turks⁹. Fray Luis returned to Rome accompanied by a Persian ambassador. On the way, they had travelled through Hungary for a meeting with the Emperor Frederick III. According to Platina's life of Calixtus III and according to Juan de Calahorra's 1684 book on the Syrian Franciscans, the Persian ambassador caused a great commotion among the Romans and the other ambassadors. They say that the pope appointed Friar Luis patriarch of Antiochia and that over a period of twenty-three years he undertook three journeys to Persia. However, this claim is not in keeping with ecclesiastical hierarchical parameters and it is more likely that his position was that of apostolic nuncio. It would be a hundred years before another patriarch of Antiochia, Juan de Ribera, strengthened the relationship with Persia, an issue important enough to deserve a separate study.

The Venetian nobleman, Ambrosio Catarino, in 1475 journeyed as ambassador to Persia, where he met with Friar Luis¹⁰. Practically at the same time, between 1473 and 1478, another Venetian, Giuseppe Barbaro, travelled to Persia and made contact with Uzun Hasan. Moreover, a Moor, born in Granada, in 1517 converted to Catholicism and was baptised by Pope Leo X. This was Juan León de Médicis, author of the *Description of Africa* (written in Arabic and in Italian), which narrates his extended

⁷ E.B. Blackburn, 'The Legacy of 'Prester John' by Damião a Goes and John More', in *Moreana* 4 (1967), 37-98; Romuald I. Lakowski, 'Thomas More and the East: Ethiopia, India and the Land of Prester John', in *Moreana* 46 (2009) 177-78; Miguel Angel Ladero, 'El Preste Juan de las Indias y los reyes de armas castellanos del siglo XVI', in *Medievo Hispano. Estudios in memoriam del Prof. Derek W. Lomax*, Madrid 1994, 221-34.

⁸ Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing, 1549-1622*, New York 2014. Álvarez-Moreno, Raúl et alii (eds.), *Una embajada española al Egipto de principios del siglo XVI: la Legatio Babilónica de Pedro Mártir de Anglería. Estudio y edición trilingüe anotada en latín, español y árabe. Estudio, edición, notas y traducción al español de Raúl Álvarez-Moreno, traducción al árabe de Ebtisam Shaban Mursi, revisión de la traducción al árabe de El Sayed Ibrahim Soheim*, Madrid, Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos en Madrid y Cantabria, 2013. F. Lopez Estrada, *Tomás Moro y España. Descripción de la Sinapia, península en la Tierra Austral*, Madrid, Círculo de Bellas Artes, 2011, new edition by the same autor with improved dating, notes and maps.

⁹ Miguel Navarro Sorní, *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo frente a la cruzada*, Valencia 2003.

¹⁰ Angelo Baregellesi Severi, 'Nuovi documenti su fr. Lodovico da Bologna al Secolo Lodovico Severi, Nunzio Apostolico in Oriente (1455-1457)', in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 69, 1-2 (1976), 3-22.

stay in Persia, in the (unidentified, Shiraz?) city of Šćedro, in 1514, a crucial year in Turkish expansionism on account of their defeat of the Persians in that year.

At the same time, the journey to Persia undertaken in March 1504 by the Roman nobleman, Luis de Varthema, was the talk of all ambassadors. His itinerary was first published in Rome in 1510, dedicated to the Spanish cardinal Bernardino de Carvajal, a factor which may have led to a later Latin edition in Milan and another in Venice in 1535. A Spanish edition was published in Seville in 1520 by Cristóbal de Arcos and reprinted in Seville in 1523, in 1570, and again in 1576. This resulted in a total of twelve editions in the sixteenth century, a real bestseller and an indication of the persistence of the Persian presence at the Spanish court. A chapter of the book is devoted to Persia with ample details on its wealth and pearls but also on the sophy's cruelty and persecutions. Besides, in 1514, Pope Leo X called on the Catholic King Fernando to enter into an alliance with Shah Isma`il who had just suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of the Turks¹¹. A year later, it would be Cardinal Julio de Médicis who would write to Cardenal Wolsey requesting an alliance with the Persians¹². This persistent interest of the Medici in Persian affairs could explain why in 1535 – once the Duke of Milan, Francesco Maria Sforza, had died – the noble Federico de Persia (possibly under the patronage of Federico Gonzaga) sought the protection of Charles V, requesting favours in exchange for his services to the Crown¹³.

At this point a certain admiration for the world of Persia and the new Safavid dynasty was beginning to emerge among Charles V's ambassadors. Tides of the Persian victories under Shah Isma`il in Anatolia quickly made it to Spain. On the other hand, news of victories by Persia's enemies, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-20) in Egypt and Syria reached Madrid. Rumour had it that 500 Spanish soldiers complete with artillery had gone to the aid of the shah in his fight against the Ottomans. Such rumours had their origin in the writings of the Italian Luigi Roncinotto. His book – entitled *Viaggio di Colucut* describing a mission carried out in 1529 – published in Venice in 1533 and reedited ten years later in the same city, upheld this incredible claim. The work claimed that the emperor had sent three emissaries to the shah: one through the Persian Gulf with the Portuguese (with the 500 Spaniards mentioned above) another through the Cape of Good Hope, Ethiopia and the Red Sea, and a third through Poland, Tartaria and the Caspian Sea.

However, there is no documentary evidence to support such claims. Rather, it was the Portuguese who supported the Persians, even though some Spaniards, of their own accord, could have taken part in the fight¹⁴. The English Hospitalers also had an interest in the Persian question. The Grand Master Hospitaler, Fabrizio de Correto, entered into relations with Isma`il in 1514 and in the following year the shah sent an emissary to the Island of Rhodes. This was Hali de Tarso, who reached the enclave

¹¹ AGS. PR, 60, 77. Roma, 3 noviembre 1514.

¹² CSP. Roma, 11 enero 1515.

¹³ AGS. E. 118 (45). Request for a favor for Frederick of Persia, in the service of the deceased Duke of Milan, 1535.

¹⁴ Michel M. Mazzaoui, 'Shah Tahmāsp and the Diaries of Marino Sanuto (1524-1533)', in *Die islamische Welt zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Wiesbaden and Beirut 1979, 416-44.

in May 1515. The Grand Master wrote to Henry VIII from Rhodes in 1516 regarding the military failure of the Turks against the shah. All this shows the interest of the English court in Rhodes, which hosted some English knights at the time¹⁵. That same moment, a military report on Persian advances was sent from Rhodes¹⁶.

Martín Fernández de Figueroa's book, published in Salamanca in 1512, may well have contributed to this positive impression. Hernando de Colón purchased this book while in Medina del Campo in 1514¹⁷. It was precisely Hernando who was to write a very important report dedicated to Charles V in 1524 on Spanish rights to the conquest of Persia. This may also be related to the book by Juan Augur of Burgos, a disciple of Nebrija, entitled *Tratado de la conquista de las Islas de Persia*, where he relates all he had witnessed there (Salamanca 1512). Without a doubt there is a connection between both books, the link being Persia in parallel with the New World¹⁸.

Since Shah Isma`il evidently considered the alliance with the Portuguese insufficient, he also sought to establish relations with Charles V as well as with Luis II of Hungary for the purposes of forging a firm alliance against the Turks. In general, however, despite a certain amount of interest, very little was known of what was happening in Persia. This lack of knowledge is evident in the narration of Friar García de Loaisa, Charles V's confessor, when he mentions writing to the emperor that Juana La Loca knew nothing of the marriage of the Marquis of Brandenburg: 'she knew as much about this marriage as she did about the things that happen in Persia'¹⁹.

It is known that Isma`il, aware of Charles's ascent to the throne, sent Friar Maronita del Monte Líbano as his ambassador to Europe in October 1519.²⁰ Del Monte Libano carried a message, written in Latin, in which the shah expressed his concern about the strife between European states and emphasised the need to set up a unified front to attack the common enemy. However, a prompt reply was not forthcoming: communications in the 1520s failed and the letter did not reach Charles until five years after its dispatch. It is surprising that despite the fact that Isma`il also wrote to the kings of Portugal and Hungary no response was received from either. Following the decisive Safavid defeat at Chaldiran in 1514, Isma`il made every effort – sending emissaries and gifts – to establish contact with Selim I to reach a peace treaty²¹. The

¹⁵ BL Cotton Ms. Otho C IX, fol 14 to 19. Rhodes, 26 February 1514?

¹⁶ CSP. Rhodes, [10] April 1516.

¹⁷ James B McKenna, *A Spaniard in the Portuguese Indies: The Narrative of Martín Fernández de Figueroa*, Cambridge 1967.

¹⁸ *Discurso declaratorio del derecho que la corona tiene en la conquista de Persia*, in CO-DOIN 16, 382-420.

¹⁹ AGS. E. 8, 143. Loaisa to Charles V, 15 July 1524.

²⁰ Giovanni Iannettone, *Politica e diritto nelle interrelazioni di Solimano il Magnifico*, 1991, 54-55, mistakenly, other authors date this letter as of 1518.

²¹ On this subject, see the chapter 'Trois missions diplomatiques safavides', in J.-L. Bacquè-Grammont, *Les Ottomans, les Safavides et leurs voisins...*, Istanbul 1987, 73-127; John M. Flannery, *The Mission of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602-1747)*, Leiden 2013, 35; Rudi Matthee, 'The Politics of Protection: Iberian Missionaries in Safavid Iran under Shah `Abbas I (1587-1629)', in Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *Contacts and Controversies between Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Pre-Modern Iran*, Würzburg 2010, 245-72; and Rudi Matthee, 'Christians in Safavid Iran: Hospitality and Harassment', in *Studies on Persianate Societies* 3 (2005), 3-43.

Portuguese drew closer to Persia after Afonso de Albuquerque definitively captured Hormuz in 1515 and especially following the fall of Egypt into Turkish hands in 1517 and the surrender of Belgrade in 1521. The possibility of a Christian-Shi'ite alliance was seen by all. In 1523, the Portuguese sent Balthasar de Pessoa but when he arrived in Persia a year later, Shah Isma'íl had already died. His son and successor, Shah Tahmasp (1524-76) failed to establish a solid relationship with the European princes²².

In the summer of 1524, the ambassador of Ferdinand of Austria, Martín de Salinas, related the news from a Persian emissary to the imperial court, then residing in Burgos. He declared: 'Here came an ambassador of the sophy [Tahmasp I] and in case he had such representation as was to be expected, His Majesty, accompanied by the Chancellor Gattinara and other personages, gave him a solemn reception. His Majesty desires to send a person to the sophy'²³. Hence, Charles V and Gattinara received the Persian envoy with all solemnity in Burgos. On the other hand, we know that the English ambassador to Charles V, Sampson, wrote from Valladolid on 16 August 1524, confirming that an ambassador from the sophy had come to tell the emperor that Persia would attack the Turk as early as April 1525 and that Carlos should do likewise. Sampson relates some of the details brought by the envoy. For instance, that the shah had converted to Christianity because at age twelve he had been saved from a certain death by an Armenian servant who had hidden him in an Armenian monastery. (His father and his brothers had failed to survive the massacre.) Charles V responded with an ambassador and a message that, because he was involved in a confrontation with France at that time, it was not possible for him to engage in war in 1525. According to Sampson, the letter was dictated by Gattinara himself.

The mission of Friar Pedro Maronita seems to have been effective, and he was received at the Diet of Nuremberg on 26 April 1524²⁴. Other data point to the fact that another Persian mission took place in August 1525 when the emissary was received in Toledo. Some chronicles refer to the presence of a Persian ambassador at the court of Toledo in 1525. But as Salinas says this occurred in June 1524 and that the envoy was received in Burgos, we are forced to conclude that it must refer to a different ambassador or that Friar Pedro was following the emperor from Nuremberg, Burgos and Toledo at that time. This latter occurrence seems unlikely since the emissary to Toledo must have been Rais Mafioli, as attested to by the chronicles of Pedro Mexía, López de Gomara and Prudencio de Sandoval. This mission was of little consequence and possibly had nothing to do with that of Maronita²⁵. At the same time, Charles received the legate of Pope Clement VII, the Archbishop of Capua (Nicholas Schomberg), who sought peace among the Christians and a treaty between France

²² Rudi Matthee, 'Distant Allies: Diplomatic Contacts between Portugal and Iran in the Reign of Shah Tahmasp, 1524-1576', in Rudi Matthee and Jorge Flores (eds.), *Portugal, the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia*, Leuven 2011, 219-48.

²³ *Correspondencia de Martín de Salinas*, 200, Burgos, 30 June 1524, Salinas to Ferdinand of Austria.

²⁴ Jan Hannart was the Imperial ambassador see Karl Lanz (ed.), *Correspondenz des kaisers Karl V (1513-1532)*, 3 vols., Leipzig 1844-46, vol. 1, 168, 169, 293.

²⁵ Letter from the sophy to Charles V, 14 July 1524, in M. García Cereceda, *Tratado de las campañas...*, Madrid 1874, vol. 2, 319.

and Spain. Both the mission by Pedro Maronita and that by Mafioli may well have been triggered by the Franco-Turkish approaches which Francis I undertook through his agent Antonio Rincón. The latter was a native of Medina del Campo, Valladolid, and as a Comunero Captain he suffered a reprisal, causing him to flee to France in about 1522. That same year he was sent by Francis I to Hungary and Poland, siding with Zapolya, the opponent of the king of Hungary. The death of Luis of Hungary in the Battle of Mohacs in 1526 ushered in major changes. Charles changed his strategy and became more fervently in seeking a Persian alliance, but perhaps it was already too late.

Towards the end of 1528 there was yet another Persian envoy at the Spanish court. In November of that year Ferdinand's ambassador, Gabriel Sánchez, beseeched the king to count on the Persians. It was precisely because the Safavids were engaged in war with the Turks in 1527 that the latter were unable to attack Hungary. Charles should send an ambassador to Persia. Charles had received word from Buda confirming that the shah had defeated the Ottomans and consequently they had to withdraw his artillery from Petrovaradin in Serbia. The news of the Turkish defeat cheered the court and, according to Salinas, the Persian ambassadors were exultant. This meant that the Turks would not support Bayboda Zapolya in Hungary, leaving Ferdinand free. On the other hand, the latter decided to send two emissaries to Persia, namely Pietro da Negro and Simón de Cellis.

Charles responded favourably to Ferdinand's request and gave orders to look for a suitable ambassador²⁶, insisting that, 'though he may not be a person of quality, he should be reliable and intelligent'. He could leave 'via Portugal or Calicut or by the route that seemed best'. In January 1529, it would once more be Sánchez who was to remind Charles V to bear in mind the possibility of an alliance with the Persians²⁷. The following month, the king decided to dispatch to Persia a Knight of Saint John of Jerusalem called Juan de Balbi, a Savoyard of the royal house. According to his instructions, he was to give an account of the peace with France and the pressure of the Turks on Hungary: in other words, of the Treaty of Madrid and of the League of Cognac, as well as of the 1526 Battle of Mohács. Four letters from Juan de Balbi to the king are extant. It is interesting to note his claim that during the journey he had gained for the imperial cause an English gentleman whom he had left in Persia to forward reports to the king. This was Robert Bransetur who had performed the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was on his way to Saint Catalina of Mount Sinai. He was not a nobleman but a London merchant who was returning after selling cloth in the Levant²⁸.

²⁶ Wilhelm Bauer und Robert Lacroix (eds.), *Die Korrespondenz Ferdinands I. Band 2/1: Familienkorrespondenz 1527 und 1528*, Sánchez to Ferdinand, Toledo, 8 November 1528, 318. 'His Majesty thinks it is a good idea to send an emissary to the Sophy, the right person has to be found and as for the rest, it will be done in accordance with this chapter'.

²⁷ AGS. E. 1553, 297. Gabriel Sánchez to Charles V, Vienne, 29 January 1529. 'bring the memorandum, that of the sophy'.

²⁸ AGS. E. 1555, 18. Charles V to Jean de Balby, 25 February 1529. Idem to the shah. See Jean Aubin, 'La misión de Robert Bransetur. Frontière du Danube et route de Basra', in Idem, *Le Latin et l'Astrolabe. Recherches sur le Portugal de la Renaissance, son expansion en Asie et les relations internationales*, Lisbon-Paris 1996, 385-405.

Balbi died on the way and Bransetur, having been received by the shah, was able to make the journey back to the Spanish court via Lisbon. In 1531, Bransetur delivered the letter from the shah to Charles V²⁹. The Turks closely tracked all the imperial initiatives in contacting the Persians; we know, for instance, that in 1531 the Turks killed Andrea Morisino in Aleppo because he had helped Bransetur to make the journey to Persia³⁰.

Juan Bodino defended Francis I on his pact with the Turks alleging that Charles V had done the same with the Persians through Robert Bransetur. However, Juan Antonio de Vera y Figueroa, in his biography of Charles V in 1656, defended the emperor claiming that the two pacts differed because ‘the alliance made with the Persians was not counter to the Pope nor against a Catholic prince but against the House of Osman, the greatest enemy of the Church’. De Vera y Figueroa also relates that Bransetur was pursued to the ends of Persia by someone called San Jacob de Soria and he also describes Rincón as a ‘Spanish defector . . . traitor to his Lord’, the reason adduced for his execution years later in Milan.

The imperial ambassador in London, the Savoyard Eustace Chapuys, being in Spain at the time, witnessed the decision to send his fellow countryman, Balbi, to Persia. In London in February 1530, Chapuys told the emperor that, given the circumstances, it had been the right decision to send an ambassador to the shah. In a private conversation with Henry VIII that same year, the ambassador told him that an attack by the Persians against the Turks could be of great help. Curiously, however, Antonio Rincón was in London at the same time and had held a number of meetings with Wolsey and with the Duke of Norfolk and they confided in him to win over to their side the Turks or the Persians, depending on the circumstances. On the occasion of the preparation for the campaign of Tunis in 1535, some counselors recommended that Charles seek a Persian alliance so that the Turks would not come to the defense of the city.

Bransetur became an agent of Cardinal Reginald Pole and both were condemned by the English parliament for disloyalty. Charles V entrusted him with a further mission to Persia in 1537. As well as with Pole, he had also made contact with another Englishman among his circle of humanists during his stay in Padua, namely Richard Shelley, who was to have a certain prominence in 1561 as a possible ambassador of Philip II to the shah. A pro-Persian Spanish-English lobby was formed in Venice, consisting of individuals such as Bransetur, Shelley, Pole, Guillaume Postell from France and the Spanish consul, Zornoza, who had lived in London in his youth³¹. Many of these entered into conversations with Ignatius of Loyola who had been in Venice between 1537 and 1539 and who in fact won over Postell and the consul Zornoza to his cause. It is necessary to consider the mission of Fr. Francis Xavier to India as this

²⁹ RAH, Salazar y Castro, 9/44, 259. Aubin, ‘La mission de Robert Bransetur’.

³⁰ AGS. E. 1308, 204, 216, 217; E. 1310, 45. Spanish sources mention that Morisini was ‘sacrificed’ for having served Charles V. See Sushil Chaudhury, Gegham Gewonean, Kéram Kévonian, *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique au début de l’ère moderne/Armenians in Asian Trade in the Early Modern Era*, 2008, 186. Jean Aubin, *Le latin et l’astrolabe: recherches sur le Portugal de la Renaissance, son expansion en Asie et les relations internationales*, 394-95.

³¹ Enrique García Hernán, *Ignacio de Loyola*, Madrid 2013, 249.

A V G E R I I
G I S L E N I I
 B V S B E Q V I I D . L E -
 G A T I O N I S T V R C I C A E
 Epistolæ quatuor.

Q V A R V M P R I O R E S D V A E
ante aliquot annos in lucem prodierunt sub
nomine Itinerum Constantinopolitani & A-
masiani.

A D I E C T A E S V N T D V A E A L T E R A E .
 Eiusdem dere militari contra Turcam insti-
 tuenda consilium.

Cum I N D I C E omnium locupletissimo.



FRANCOEVRTI
 Apud heredes Andreæ Wecheli, Claud. Marnium
 & Ioann. Aubrium.
 M. D. XCV.

had bearings on Persia since two key Jesuits, the Portuguese Francisco Mendes Pinto and the Dutch Gaspar de Berzé (Barzaeus), were involved. Francisco Mendes Pinto's work *Peregrinación* has survived and became famous, being translated into Spanish. His pilgrimage was practically contemporaneous with the journey of the Venetian Michele Membré³².

There seems to have been two further Persian emissaries to Charles V, one of whom passed through Portugal; yet we lack precise information regarding them, except for what is mentioned by Membré. Though we can give an account of a rather strange letter from the Venetian ambassador in Persia, Diómedes Barbaro, to the Dux in 1544, in which he narrates inexplicable events in Tabriz³³.

Beginning in 1555, a series of alliances between the Persians and the Turks as well as between the Spanish Empire and the Ottomans halted diplomatic contacts focused on military offensives, until March 1558 when both Philip II and Pius IV decided to send an emissary to Persia through the agent of Ferdinand I in Istanbul, Miguel Cernovic. The choice fell on the Flemish Ogier de Busbecq who had previously been sent as Ferdinand I's ambassador to England in connection with the marriage between Philip II and Mary Tudor. In his *Turkish Letters*, de Busbecq gave a description of Persia and of Shah Tahmasp, which gained prominence in a Spanish edition from 1610³⁴. A further mission took place in 1562, headed by Richard Shelley. This time the motivation came from Ferdinand I whose ambassador at the Porte claimed that the sending of an emissary would be well considered by Shah Tahmasp.

Richard Shelley had been in France and between 1535 and 1538 had attended the University of Padua where he entered into contact with Richard Morison who went to Istanbul and later became an archenemy of Cardinal Pole. Between 1539 and 1540 Shelley also travelled to the Ottoman capital where he met Antonio Rincón. In 1552, he was appointed ambassador to King Ferdinand of Austria and he was in the service of Philip II and Mary Tudor in 1555. His name appears among the English chamber assistants of Philip, namely, Richard Besset and Anthony Kempe. The latter was a relative of Thomas Sherley, the father of the Sherley brothers who travelled to Persia and who came to serve as ambassadors of the shah.

³² A.H. Morton (tr.), *Michele Membré. Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539-1542)*, London 1993, See also Enrique García Hernán, 'The Holy See, the Spanish Monarchy and Safavid Persia in the Sixteenth Century: Some Aspects of the Involvement of the Society of Jesus', in Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (eds.), *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, London-New York 2012, 181-206.

³³ Marques de la Tripalda to Charles V, Nápoles 26 September 1534, quoted by Gennaro Varriale, 'Nápoles y el azar de Corón (1532-1534)', in *Tiempos Modernos*, 22 (2011/1) 30 pages (available online: www.tiemposmodernos.org/tm3/index.php/tm/article/viewArticle/222; accessed March 2015). BNM. Ms. 6149, 'Carta de Diomedes Bárbaro a la Señoría de Venecia sobre un extraño caso sucedido en la ciudad de Tauris en Persia en donde era embajador. 1544 (ff. 15 v-17 v)'. See also 'La nueva conversión del Rey de Persia con el desbarato de 12.000 turcos después de su conversión (ff. 156 -59)'. Sreck M. Dzaja and Günter Weiss (eds.), *Austro-Turcica 1541-1552. Diplomatistische Akten des Habsburgischen Gesandtschaftsverkehrs mit der Hohen Pforte im Zeitalter Süleymans des Prächtigen*, Munich 1995, 243-376.

³⁴ *Embaxada y viages de Constantinopla y Amasea, de Augerio Gislenio Busbequio . . .* Written by Ogier Ghislain. *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, 1881.

In 1557, once the Order of Saint John was reestablished, Shelley was appointed knight at the behest of Cardinal Pole. In this, he was following a family tradition since his uncle died in the defence of Rhodes in 1522. As he himself mentions, he entered the service of Charles V in 1552 and from 1564 onwards served in various diplomatic missions. Philip recalled him from Geneva to Madrid in 1562 to prepare a mission he had proposed some years previously, namely that of going to Persia. Four memoranda on the journey addressed to the secretary Juan Vázquez de Molina are extant. In these Shelley describes in detail how to approach the journey and estimates its costs. It is important to emphasize that the mission was thoroughly prepared. He had previously consulted Antonio Rincón and particularly Pietro Zane who had been to Persia. He also consulted Tommaso Contarini whose grandfather had been to Persia, as well as contacted Baron Sigismund von Herberstein who had made several trips to Russia. He had discussed the trip with all these personages as he planned to follow the same route as they had taken to get to Persia³⁵. The instructions given by Philip II to him pointed out the desirability of taking advantage of the misgivings between the sultan and the shah, all the more so since Bayazid, the sultan's estranged son, had taken refuge in Persia. Philip II's proposal was for a naval attack 'placing in order such a huge number of galleys that go to offend the common enemy'. The aim was that 'they do not leave their states to wage war that they stay within their own boundaries and even make them feel unsafe within them'³⁶. Shelley's proposed route to Persia was remarkable, namely, to travel through Germany, Poland and Russia, counting on a budget of 2,000 ducats for three years³⁷. The mission was canceled due to the eight-year peace between Ferdinand and the Turks concluded in 1562. Shelley, however, persisted in his desire to journey to Persia and proposed a new mission in 1570. A year earlier, in 1569, Friar Gaspar de la Cruz published a book on the kingdom of Hormuz in Évora which had considerable repercussion at the court at Madrid.

Preparations for what was later to become the Holy League were under way at this point, and the delegates considered that the document should not specify the struggle as against the infidels in general but against the Turks pure and simple since the Persians were now allies, an important nuance. Under these circumstances, Shelley, who had abandoned Malta due to his misgivings with the Grand Master, proposed to the Spanish ambassador in Rome to launch a new mission to Persia. The aim was precisely to continue with what had arisen with the leagues in 1471 and 1536, namely, preemption through a Turkish alliance. It seems that it was the Venetian ambassador who first proposed the journey to him, but Shelley rejected the offer on the grounds that his first commitment was to Philip II. However, the Spanish ambassador was of the opinion that Shelley's proposal was triggered by the straights in which he found himself at the time: he was living in poverty, since his pension from the king was cancelled on his abandoning Malta³⁸.

³⁵ Ambrogio Contarini went to Persia in 1474, and so did Caterino Zeno, Pietro's grandfather.

³⁶ AGS. E. 486, 65.

³⁷ AGS. CC 377. Four memoranda from Shelley to the Secretary Vázquez, Madrid, September 1562.

³⁸ AGS. E. 913, 110. Juan de Zúñiga a Felipe II, Rome, 29 April 1570.

Further attempts at sending emissaries to Persia continued throughout the remainder of the sixteenth century. For instance there were those of England and Portugal with Edward Webbe, Anthony Jenkinson, Jacob Drapper (who was from Pera), Alonso de Tovar and especially during the Battle of Lepanto with Miguel Abreu from Lima. The latter has been dealt with elsewhere by several authors. However, there is no evidence in this period of individuals bearing Persian names coming to the Spanish court as ambassadors from the shah³⁹. An important change with respect to the Persian question occurred following the death of King Sebastián, since at that moment a new Ottoman-Persian war was raging (1578-85). Thus, the Viceroy of Naples sent the Armenian Juan Bautista and, once in Persia, the shah sent him back to the court of Philip II with letters aimed at consolidating a mutual alliance.

The union of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns meant that Philip II entered into contact with the Captain of Hormuz through the Council of Portugal. These contacts became frequent and documentation regarding Persia is to be found in the Council of Italy, specifically in the Sicily section. Philip lost no time in informing the shah that he was now king of Portugal. We next see Spanish merchants show up in Hormuz, for instance Ventura de Frías from Burgos or Juan Curiel de la Torre, likewise from Burgos and very well connected with the Genovese at the court⁴⁰. The Augustinian Simón de Moraes sought to give the new king firsthand information of what was really happening in Persia. The key person of the highest prestige in connection with a possible conquest of Istanbul and an alliance with Persia was Don Juan de Austria. His success at Lepanto and the conquest of Tunis gave him enough fame to position him as leader of an alliance with Persia, in the context of a King Philip II being named Emperor of the Orient. His fame was such and so long-lasting that the Carmelite, Friar Pablo Simón, in 1608 recalled his figure as a model of a general capable of leading an endeavour against the Turks and establishing an alliance with Persia. His great leadership won Lepanto 'due to the respect which Don Juan de Austria commanded on all'⁴¹. An important conduit for this was the Augustinian monastery of Hormuz. In 1588, the Jesuits Monserrate and Páez arrived there on their way to Ethiopia⁴². But at the Spanish court a favourable opinion was growing to offer a warm welcome to Persian nobles.

³⁹ Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing 1549-1622*, New York 2014, 150-179. Raiswell, Richard. 'Webbe, Edward (b. 1553/4), soldier and adventurer.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford 2004.

⁴⁰ Jean Aubin, 'Per viam portugalem: autour d'un projet diplomatique de Maximilien II', in *Mare luso-indicum*, vol. 4, Paris 1980, 45-88. Carlos Javier de Carlos Morales, 'La hacienda real', in de Castilla y la revolución financiera de los genoveses (1560-1575)', in *Chronica Nova* 26 (1999), 37-78.

⁴¹ Enrique García Hernán, 'Pío V y el mesianismo profético', in *Hispania Sacra* 45 (1993), 83-102. AGS. E. 493, Report from Friar Pablo Simón to Philip III.

⁴² After a few years in Goa, Monserrate came to Abyssinia in 1589 with Pedro Paez, but both fell into the hands of Arabs and spent seven years in captivity, especially in San'a in Yemen, serving in the Turkish galleys. Once ransomed for 1,300 ducats, both arrived in Goa in November 1596, where Monserrate spent the rest of his life. See on this Montserrate, *Mongolicae Legationis Commentarius*, ed. H. Hosten, *Memoirs Asiatic Society Bengal* 9 (1914), 534-689; trad. by J.S. Hoyland, London 1922.

First Persians at the Spanish Court

From the beginning of the seventeenth century an awareness of the presence of Persian ambassadors at the Spanish court began to appear. The most renowned of these is Don Juan de Persia, famous for having written an account of his journey. For over a century, it was erroneously believed that he died in 1604. Authors such as Narciso Alonso Cortés, Luis Gil and Carlos Alonso have dealt with the first Persian ambassadors at the Spanish court. In my own work I advanced certain novel aspects relating to the early Persian ambassadors at the Spanish court, claiming, as others have also done, that Don Juan died much later than 1604 and that his death was due to natural causes and not murder⁴³.

Some of the diplomatic agents sent by Shah `Abbas I (r. 1587-1629) to Spain converted to Christianity under the patronage of the Royal House, and in fact King Philip III and his wife Queen Margarita acted as godparents for some of them. The arrival of Husayn `Ali Beg in Valladolid in 1601 also brought Uruch Beg (Juan de Persia), `Ali Quli Beg (Diego de Persia) and Bunyad Beg (Felipe de Persia) who all embraced Christianity. But there were others: Francisco and Tomás in 1605, Manuel Bautista in 1608, Diego and Felipe (different from the above-mentioned) in 1610. The historical context was one of building bridges with the Persians by means of diplomatic relations but also it was in the interest of the king to win over faithful people to his Crown. This implied the conversion of specific individuals and at the same time it served as an example of a king capable of benevolently hosting the newly converted and offering them positions in the service of the state, either at the court itself or in the army.

As said, the best known of these is Don Juan de Persia, whose fame rests on his *Relaciones*. However, the most successful in adapting to the world of the court was Don Diego who made a plea to the king for entry into the order of Knights of Santiago, though the attempt was unsuccessful. Some of these Persians did not contribute very much, especially at the beginning, to a policy of service to the Habsburgs. They were merely exiles because the court did not know how to make use of them; they were accepted only in part and the court did not know how to take advantage of their great potential as mediating agents. They were known as 'Persian gentlemen' and as time passed they gained social recognition and became well integrated in Spanish society. The end result of this was a distancing from the potential roles they could play at the court as mediators in conflict zones, due to their position as frontier men, capable of straddling sides. Over a period of fifty years, these Persian gentlemen, underwent a process of complete hispanisation.

The historical context of Don Juan de Persia's arrival in Spain was that of the diplomatic mission sent to Europe by Shah `Abbas I in 1599. That mission was head-

⁴³ Luis Gil Fernández, *El Imperio luso-español y la Persia safávida*, vol. 1 (1582-1605), Madrid, 2006; L. Gil Fernández, 'Tras las huellas de don Juan de Persia y otros persas', in *Silva* 2 (2003), 111-229. He uses sources principally from the Archivo General de Simancas. José Cutillas, 'Las Relaciones de Don Juan de Persia', in *Sharq al-Andalus* 16-17 (1999-2002), 211-25. Enrique García Hernán, 'The Persian Gentlemen at the Spanish Court in the Early Seventeenth Century', in Matthee and Flores (eds.), *Portugal the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia*, 283-300.

ed by Husayn `Ali Beg and Anthony Sherley⁴⁴. They were to approach the pope and Catholic princes – the emperor and king of Spain – to establish an anti-Ottoman coalition. The activities of the Sherleys are fairly well known, but perhaps less well known is that prior to their arrival in Persia, other English individuals had already been there. Examples are Bransetur, mentioned above, as well as John of Medin Dilen from London who had arrived there from Laos with the aim of establishing a commercial agreement which would enable the English coming through Cambodia to sell certain products, an initiative that gave rise to the English India Company⁴⁵. We know that John had been at the Persian court in the service of the shah and that he had received authorisation for the English to trade freely in the shah's territory. Towards the year 1600, John had been sent as ambassador to the Mughal king with the aim of getting authorisation for the English and Dutch to enter his territory. However, with fifteen other merchants he was taken prisoners by the Portuguese, temporarily halting the advance of the English East India Company. There was considerable suspicion that Sherley favoured those English⁴⁶. On the other hand, in 1604, great concern arose when the shah recovered Tabriz and took over the entire Persian Gulf littoral, leaving only the tiny isle of Hormuz in the hands of the king⁴⁷. From then onwards, greater caution surrounded everything concerning Persia. Hence, when an Armenian archbishop arrived in Milan claiming to be an ambassador of the shah, he was considered an imposter⁴⁸. The Carmelite friar Pablo Simon remained at the court over four months between 1608 and 1609, trying to find a solution for the commercial problems caused by the English. He proposed a Hispano-Portuguese alliance with the shah by means of an attack on the Turks. Another measure would be to allow trade with Persia via Moscow and not via India, all the more so since English, Dutch and French traders followed this route. However, the Council of State overruled this proposal in order to maintain the existing agreement with the factor Sebastián Bucler for communication with Persia via India⁴⁹.

The journey across Russia to Central Europe took over two years and on the way Anthony Sherley, who was at odds with all his companions on the trip, was found to have had taken care of private interests. The negotiations concerning the anti-Turkish league took place in Prague, Rome and Valladolid. Sherley was to return to Persia (though he finally stayed in Venice), while Husayn would come to Spain and re-

⁴⁴ Miguel Angel de Bunes, 'Antonio Sherley, un aventurero al servicio de Felipe III', in *Peso de todo el mundo (1622), discurso sobre el aumento de esta monarquía (1625), Sir Anthony Sherley (1565-1635?)*, edition and studies by Angel Alloza Aparicio, Miguel Angel de Bunes Ibarra and José Antonio Martínez Torres, Madrid 2010, 47-69. AGS. E. 493. Copies of the letters to the Mughal king, passport for John of Medin Dilen. AGS. E. 1293 (77). The Safavids retook Tabriz in 1604.

⁴⁵ AGS. E. 493. Fr Diego de Santa Ana to Philip III, Isfahan, 13 January 1608 and 8 February 1608. John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English India Company*, London 1993.

⁴⁶ AGS. E. 493. Copies of the letters to the Mughal king, passport for John of Medin Dilen.

⁴⁷ AGS. E. 1293 (77), Persia recovers Tauris, 1604.

⁴⁸ AGS. E. 1293 (43). Deceit of an Armenian archbishop who claims to be an ambassador of the king of Persia, 1604. There is another mission of the Armenian Count Seffergiorfermo, about whom we have no information, in AGS. E. 1299 (46).

⁴⁹ AGS. 493. Fr Pablo Simón de Jesús María to Philip III, Madrid, 14 March 1609.

turn to Persia via Lisbon⁵⁰. Some of his travel companions stayed on in Rome, determined to embrace Christianity, though Don Juan de Persia was not among them as he had not yet decided on conversion. The converts at Rome were Scia Hussein (Shah Husayn), the mission's secretary, Risi (Riza), its apothecary, and Alli (ʿAli), its cook. They were baptised by the pope, adopting the names Clemente de Persia, Pedro de Persia and Juan de Persia. We may wonder why Don Juan did not undergo baptism in Rome with his other three colleagues. He himself was to give the explanation in his *Relaciones*: clearly in keeping with a providentialist and visionary idea of the Spanish monarchy. Husayn brought four nobles with him, among them his own nephew, and fifteen servants. They arrived in Valladolid, where the court resided at that point, on 13 August 1601, and departed for Lisbon on 11 October of the same year. They were lavishly treated in Valladolid: Husayn attended the baptism of a Spanish princess, received 2,000 escudos, a gold chain worth 600 escudos and four others worth 200 escudos for his most distinguished companions, and finally he was provided with 8,000 escudos for his return trip. According to a witness, he departed 'extremely happy'⁵¹. The ambassador composed – perhaps with the aid of Don Juan – some poems (which were recently discovered and published) and a song in honour of the newly born princess⁵².

The names of the four nobles accompanying Husayn were Uruch Beg (Juan de Persia), ʿAli Guli (Quli) Beg (Felipe de Persia), Bunyad Beg (Diego de Persia) and Hasan ʿAli Beg. The first three remained in Valladolid to embrace Christianity. Four servants returned to Persia just after arriving in Moscow; another three – mentioned above – remained in Rome under the protection of the pope. The Muslim chaplain (faqih) was killed in Mérida, possibly because he noted down in a book the names of the numerous Spanish women he had seduced. Hence, the ambassador returned with very few men and a lot of promises of collaboration, concretely, the dispatch of diplomats on the part of the Holy See and of the Spanish Monarchy. Also remaining in Spain were a group of 'Persian gentlemen' who were assigned the title of 'Don' in public documents and were listed under those of 'Persian Nation', or as they themselves said 'Persians by nation'. The best known was Don Juan de Persia (Faysal Nazari), but the most distinguished, perhaps, was Don Diego, a descendant of the dukes of Xamen⁵³. As Don Juan de Persia himself relates in his *Relaciones*, Don

⁵⁰ It is interesting to bear in mind the documentation regarding the Augustinians who were with these diplomats. On Nicolás de Melo (1578-1615) see Gregorio de Santiago Vela, *Ensayo de una biblioteca ibero-americana de la Orden de San Agustín*, Madrid, 1920, vol. 5, 373-377; and C. Alonso, 'El P. Nicolás de Melo, OSA. Embajador y Mártir', in *Missionalia Hispanica* 15 (1958), 219-244. See Gregorio de Santiago Vela, *Ensayo de una biblioteca ibero-americana de la Orden de San Agustín*, Madrid, 1920, vol. 3, 253-79; L. Gil and J.M. Floristán, 'Las misiones luso-españolas en Persia y la Cristiandad armenia (1600-1614)', in *Sefarad* 46 (1986), 207-19; J.M. Floristán, 'Carta del Patriarca armenio David IV a Felipe III', in *Sefarad* 46 (1986), 197-205.

⁵¹ L. Cabrera de Córdoba, *Relaciones de las cosas sucedidas en la corte de España desde 1599 hasta 1614*, Junta de Castilla y León, 1997, 122.

⁵² Francesco De Benedictis, 'Tra letteratura di viaggio e memoria nella Valladolid del 1601', in *Archeologia e Risorgimento* (2004) 85-98.

⁵³ Juan de Persia, *Relaciones de don Juan de Persia*, prólogo y notas de D. Narciso Alonso Cortés, Madrid 1946. Original edition in Valladolid 1604.

Diego wanted to become a Christian in Valladolid and he placed himself ‘in the hands of the Jesuits for instruction in the faith and to become a catechumen’. It seems that Don Juan wished to explain the supernatural and the extraordinary elements of their conversion, as the very title of his work indicates. On the one hand, he confirms that Don Diego became a Christian in Spain precisely because ‘he was partial to the Spanish manner of life, the habit suiting him well’, meaning that he liked Spain and its way of life. But for Don Juan himself, that was not the truth: rather, for him, the truth was a moral and a theological truth, that of divine design. However, if we compare the manner in which he describes his conversion with the conversion of Ignatius of Loyola, described by Fr. Pedro de Ribadeneira in the biography of the founder of the Jesuits, we see a clear parallel. Ignatius changed his heart into ‘soft wax’ so that he could stamp the doctrine of Christ on it. Don Diego and the other Persians had changed their hearts into ‘soft wax to make a present of them and thaw them with the heat of the doctrine of Christ’. This image is further corroborated by the two important references which he makes to the Society of Jesus, replete with praise, because the Jesuits ‘have discovered the true way to teach’. This leads us to wonder to what extent the Mercedarian, Alonso Remón, – the supposed translator of *Relaciones* – could have collaborated on such high praise of Ignatius and the Jesuits. The truth is that he had already done so in his *Historia de la Orden de la Merced*, where he exalts the Society of Jesus and states that Ignatius was a ‘light of virtue and prudence’⁵⁴.

This decision to place themselves in the hands of the Jesuits for their Christian instruction should be seen in an international context which was favourable towards the establishment of the order in Persia and also especially due to the strength of the order in Valladolid linked to the Duke of Lerma, grandson of Francisco de Borja. Don Juan de Persia was effusive in his praise of the Society because he knew it firmly transmitted doctrine and he was sure that thanks to the Jesuit manner of teaching new Christians were formed. After a brief sojourn in Lisbon, Don Juan decided to return to Valladolid so that once there he could resort to the Society’s St Ambrose College, where Don Diego de Persia was, to proceed with his Christian formation in contact with the Jesuits. The most outstanding members there at the time were Manuel de Rojas, Luis de la Puente – distinguished spiritual director – and Francisco de Galarza, who all had been Rectors of that College⁵⁵. Those who were responsible for his Chris-

⁵⁴ Pedro de Ribadeneira: ‘his heart was already changed and as soft wax ready for the stamping in it of divine things, the voices and praises of the Lord that entered through the ears penetrated to the interior of his very being and with the heat of devotion melted there contemplating the truth.’ Don Juan de Persia: ‘wanted to show in Spain that it was the same God and that from the remotest confines of Arabia he knew he could bring the most rebellious souls to the feet of Europe and make soft wax of those hearts to make presents of them and melt them in the heat of the doctrine of Christ’.

⁵⁵ ‘I went to visit Ali Guli Bec [Felipe de Persia] to the Society of Jesus (as discrete as they are great religious), God began to work on me a new marvel and I began to feel certain interior desires to seek and find his Divine Majesty. A thousand times blessed be his holy name, that being so confused and incapable of articulating speech, God loosened the stuttering tongue of another Moses and asking for baptism I myself in an inn, without any master to teach me, writing in the Persian language the prayers, articles and commandments and all the other Christian principles necessary to turn an unfaithful into a catechumen’, in *Relaciones*, 253. On the Jesuits in Valladolid, see Javier Burrieza Sánchez, *Valladolid, tierras y caminos de jesuitas. Presencia de la Compañía de Jesús en la provincia de Valladolid, 1545-1767*, Valladolid 2007.

tian formation seem to have been Fr. Francisco de Galarza and the Augustinian Alonso Remón, chaplain to Álvaro de Carvajal, principal Almsgiver of the king and ultimate authority in the conversion of all the Persians. These two religious figures had a major role in the *Relaciones*: the former signed the *Approval* and the latter was the one who corrected and adapted the text so as to make it meet the standard of proper Spanish. The most important point, however, was that in 1602 Fr. Galarza was appointed Visitor of Studies in the Province of Castile, which made him responsible for the censoring of writings. It is not surprising that the king would choose him for the approval of different books. We know that he signed a number of approvals in 1603: for instance, the book by Fr. Jerónimo Gracián, *Lámpara encendida y Propagación de la fe* and *Historia de los dos Soldados de Christo, Barlaan y Iosafat* by Francisco de Galarza. It is to be remembered that the story of those soldiers, written in Latin by Saint John Damascene, is a Persian legend widely known in the West and which at the time, due to the presence of the Persians in the court of Spain, enjoyed particular interest⁵⁶. Thus, Galarza had dealings with the Persians in connection with the approval of both works: *Relaciones* and *Historia de los Soldados de Christo*.

Within the *Relaciones* itself, there are clues that indicate how the process of the author's conversion evolved. Leaving aside the action of God, it does not seem possible – as Don Juan attempts to convince us – that he could write the Christian Doctrine in Persian without having first undergone a process of formation. We can deduce from the *Relaciones* that those responsible for his gradual formation were, on the one hand, a Venetian residing in Lisbon, called Nicolás Clavel (Crivelli) – who spoke Turkish – and, on the other hand, a servant of Philip III who was a renegade of the Turk nation and translator of Turkish, called Francisco de San Juan. Later, when he had acquired a certain knowledge of Spanish, undoubtedly the Jesuits could have decisively influenced his formation. Don Juan arrived in Spain as chronicler of the mission and his skill in his role as historian enabled him to capture, in his *Relaciones*, the autobiographical style of the period with a supernatural sense of God's working on him, together with the (Sufi) illuminationist tendency in which, without the mediation of the Holy Scripture or of the Church, it was possible to have an enriching encounter with God in a personal relationship. This belief imbued all the Persian converts. This explains how Don Diego de Persia could claim, in a memorandum to the king, that 'illuminated by the Holy Spirit he abandoned the Law of Mahomet', something which characteristically appears in the memoranda of the Persians⁵⁷. As late as

⁵⁶ J. Cutillas (ed.), *La vida de Buda: El Kitab Bilawhar va Budasf según la versión persa*, Universidad de Alicante 2006. Francisco de Galarza (Valladolid, c1548 – SJ 1565 – professed in 1585. Rector of Ávila (1584) and Valladolid (1587 and 1603), provincial when he died in Soria, 1610. *Historia de los dos Soldados de Christo, Barlaan y Josafat*, trad. by Juan de Arce Solórzano, Madrid 1608 (BN Madrid, R/1138). He also wrote the *Vida del P. Lapuente*. See also Patricia Cañizares, 'La Historia de los dos soldados de Cristo, Barlaan y Josafat, traducida por Juan de Arce Solórzano', in *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios latinos* 19 (2000), 259-71.

⁵⁷ On Sufism, see Miguel Asín Palacios, *El Islam Cristianizado Estudio del 'Sufismo' a través de la obra de Abenarabi de Murcia*, Madrid 1931; Miguel Asín Palacios, *Sadilíes y alumbrados*, Madrid 1944-1951; Miguel Asín Palacios, *Huellas del islam: Sto. Tomás de Aquino, Turmeda, Pascal, S. Juan de la Cruz*, Madrid 1941. Sufism ended up influencing the Spanish mysticism of the illuminists and of Saint John of the Cross maybe due to his possible connection with Christian roots.

1625, Don Diego relates to the king that he was one of the high-minded and principal gentlemen of Persia and that 'it was God who saw fit to illuminate his understanding so that he opened his heart, as he had done, to our Holy Catholic Faith'⁵⁸. This may also be observed in his poetic vein. A number of edifying poems are included in the *Relaciones*, but there are also others, published recently, dealing with the subject of his conversion and on the love he felt towards a beautiful woman but without faith, perhaps the wife he had left behind in Persia⁵⁹.

At the same time, the shah sent other ambassadors to Rome. These were Francisco da Costa, a priest of Indian origin and ex-Jesuit, and Diego de Miranda, a captain, also of Indian origin, who had been in Persia at the time sent there by the pope. Their mission was to inform the pope of the shah's good intentions regarding Christianity. For a reply, in 1601, Clement VIII studied the possibility of sending both emissaries back to Persia, this time as his own ambassadors. This brought about disagreement with the Florentine gentleman, Giovanni Baptista Vecchietti, who accused Da Costa of having abandoned the Society of Jesus, 'prete vagante' in Lisbon, while speaking ill of Miranda for being an Indian, born in Hormuz who had publically married a prostitute in Rome. Despite the criticism, Pope Clement finally sent three emissaries to Persia: the Spaniard Luis Félix together with Francisco da Costa and Diego de Miranda⁶⁰.

Regarding the Persian legation of Husayn `Ali Beg and Anthony Sherley, and to underline the contribution of the Society of Jesus, we must point out that on arrival in Prague, Antonio Sherley, an Anglican, requested a confessor because he wanted to return to Catholicism. The Nuncio put him in touch with the Spanish Jesuit, Pedro de Buiza, a man 'di molto valore' – according to the nuncio – and 'well known in the court', as the ambassador in Prague told the king. He was a theologian with considerable diplomatic skills. Sherley did not want an English or a French Jesuit but a Spanish one. It seems the two understood each other well and established a firm friendship⁶¹. In Rome he also struck up a friendship with some English Jesuits, advisers to Philip III: for instance with Robert Preston (1546-1610) and especially with Joseph

AGS. E. 2756. Diego de Persia, 1 February 1629. AGS. E. 2745. 19 June 1610. Don Diego y Don Felipe de Persia, 'llegados a la corte, alumbrados de la divina gracia, han dejado la mala secta de Mahoma'.

⁵⁸ Palacio Real, Personal, Caja 827, 16. Report of Don Diego de Persia, 1625.

⁵⁹ If from proportion so beautiful,
For the evil of my sins
My faries withdrew me
;O unfortunat star!
Sadly living without her
In the fields of my faith:
If I die not. What shall I do?

⁶⁰ Roberto Amalgia, 'Giovann Battista e Gerolamo Vecchietti, viaggiatori in Oriente', in *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* 9 (1956), 313-50, 324, see also M. Bernardini, 'Giovann Battista and Gerolamo Vecchietti in Hormuz', in Matthee and Flores (eds), *Portugal, the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia*, 265-82.

⁶¹ Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV). Borghese III, 87, 133. Nuncio de Praga, Spinelli, al cardenal de San Jorge, Praga, 13 November 1600. AGS. E. 707, 23-24. Guillén de San Clemente to Felipe III, Praga, 10 marzo 1601. Vid. Carlos Alonso, 'Embajadores de Persia en las Cortes de Praga, Roma y Valladolid (1600-1601)', in *Anthologica Annua* 36 (1989), 10-271.

Creswell (1556-1623) who was in charge of affairs concerning Persia at the court. (Limitations of space prevent me from elaborating on this issue here, but I hope to do so on another occasion.)

The ambassador in Rome – the Duke of Sessa – informed the king, through a coded letter, that Sherley and Persons were good friends. Sherley never tired of affirming in one place or other that the shah was willing to cooperate with 60,000 infantry and an equal number of cavalry against the Turks. In return, he requested concrete collaboration, for instance, an exchange of ambassadors, freedom of trade and military aid. He especially wanted the iron bars arriving in Hormuz to be longer, in order to produce swords in accordance with the standard measures of the Persians.

Shah `Abbas I, descendant of a family of converted Christians and husband of a Georgian-Christian concubine-wife, seemed to show an inclination towards Christianity, according to what Da Costa told the pope. His wife was the daughter of Simón Causeno – of the lineage of the kings of Georgia – and of Allah-Virdi Khan, his favourite general, a converted Armenian who was known to be friendly towards Christians. The ex-Jesuit drew up a lengthy report on Persia, handing it on to the ambassador in Rome, the Duke of Sessa, who in turn forwarded it to Philip III⁶². On the other hand, he held long conversations with some Spanish Jesuits in Rome, for instance, with Bartolomé Pérez and Juan Álvarez, Spanish and Portuguese assistants respectively of Father General Claudio Acquaviva, and also with Fr. Sebastián Rodríguez. The governing bodies of the Society of Jesus had their doubts about the true intentions of Francisco da Costa since he was too favourably inclined towards the shah's military plan. Although Francisco da Costa left the Society in 1598, he was readmitted when he was appointed legate to Persia, since he had the task of getting a considerable number of Jesuits from India to Persia via Hormuz⁶³.

Pope Clement VIII was so keen on the possibilities of an embassy to Persia that he sent Da Costa to `Abbas with the charge of legate *a latere*. Acquaviva, on the other hand, was to procure the help of Philip III in securing the passage of Jesuits to Persia. It should be borne in mind that, in 1600, Philip III had already sent three Augustinians to request the shah to continue the war against the Turks. For that reason, royal favour towards the Jesuits stirred up some misgivings among the Augustinians. In fact the antipathy of the Augustinians vis-à-vis the Jesuit mission was such that the Archbishop of Braga, the Augustinian Agustín de Castro, beseeched the king to desist in favouring the Jesuit mission to Persia. The Augustinians claimed the exclusive right to those territories since they had set up a mission in Hormuz in 1571 when the

⁶² AGS. K 1630, 609. 'Relación del padre Francisco de Acosta portugués que ha venido de la India oriental sobre la embajada del rey de Persia ha enviado con un inglés hecha a instancia de Su Santidad, vista en el Consejo de Estado a 12 de junio'. Another quite similar report written in Italian was forwarded to the Pope, see ASV. Borghese, II, 20, 158-159, 'Informatione di Francesco da Costa, sacerdote portuguese, venuto dall'India, alla Santità di Nostro Signore intorno all'ambasciata del Persiano', published by C. Alonso, 'Una embajada de Clemente VIII a Persia (1600-1609)', in *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 34 (1996), 7-125, 77-79.

⁶³ AGS. K. 1630. Relación de la embajada que el rey de Persia envió con don Antonio Sherley y Cusán Alibey, persiano. Roma, 8 June 1601, published by C. Alonso, 'Embajadores de Persia en las Cortes de Praga, Roma y Valladolid (1600-1601)', in *Anthologica Annua* 36 (1989), 223-26.

Jesuits had abandoned the place because of its insalubrity. In 1572, there had already been twelve Augustinians in Hormuz and Goa and in fact they had set up houses in Bandar `Abbas, in Masqat and in other places. The emissaries sent by Philip II had been Augustinians, for example Fr. Simón de Moraes and Fr. Agustín de Melo⁶⁴. The progress of the Order there had been little short of spectacular, so much so that by 1600 they already counted over 200 members. Allowing Jesuits to go there instead of Augustinians could be taken as an insult⁶⁵. The end result was that due to the pressure of the Augustinians, the king finally halted the project of sending Jesuits. The Society already counted on an important experience in Istanbul: there were unfruitful attempts at founding a college there in the lifetime of Ignatius of Loyola, and in 1563 and 1583 concrete plans were drawn up and in fact some members resided there with Giulio Mancinelli as Superior. It was thanks to France that the Jesuits set themselves up in the Ottoman capital: this happened after an agreement was signed in 1609, with an active presence of twelve permanent fathers in the city, all French. Hence, it would not have been difficult to send new missionaries to Persia, but the plan was thwarted. It is thus not surprising that in the face of the Spanish Monarchy dragging its feet, the first permanent mission of the Order to Persia was undertaken by French Jesuits, although it would not happen until 1649⁶⁶.

At least, it was decided to send Da Costa and the soldier Diego de Miranda to Persia. However, due to discord between them they split up. Only Da Costa made it to Isfahan, where the resident Augustinians introduced him as Apostolic Legate. The legate was more of a military advisor to the shah than a Pontifical diplomat and in fact he took part in the military campaigns against the Turks. This fact, unveiled by the shah himself in a letter to the pope, is very revealing with regard to the military qualities of Francisco de Castro. He probably had dealings with Allah-Virdi Khan, who was known as a friend of the Christians⁶⁷.

The preparations for the legation of Francisco da Costa were rushed, yet suggest that the establishment of a permanent Jesuit mission in Hormuz, despite Augustinian resistance, was the crucial issue. Yet, neither the Jesuits nor the Augustinians were the only sources of information for the pope regarding the situation in Persia; news arrived through diverse channels. From 1582 an Armenian called Tomás worked in the Vatican Library and he knew the Persian language perfectly. When Husayn `Ali Beg's embassy arrived in Rome, it was Tomás who did the interpreting. Moreover, the pope wanted Tomás to accompany the Persian ambassador on his mission to Spain and

⁶⁴ C. Alonso 'El P. Simón de Moraes, pionero de las misiones agustinianas en Persia', in *Analecta Augustiniana* 62 (1979). See also the recent book by John M. Flannery, *The Mission of Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602-1747)*, Leiden 2013.

⁶⁵ Alonso, 'El P. Simón de Moraes'.

⁶⁶ Enrique García Hernán, 'Persia en la acción conjunta del Papado y las Monarquías católicas Aproximación a la actuación de la Compañía de Jesús (1549-1649)', in *Hispania Sacra* 61/125 (2010), 213-41; and Rudi Matthee, 'Poverty and Perseverance: The Jesuit Mission of Isfahan and Shamakhi in Late Safavid Iran', in *Al-Qantara* 36, 2 (2015), 463-501.

⁶⁷ See the entry under his name in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Acosta had good military knowledge, possibly mathematics as well, which might be of interest to the shah. In order to deploy squadrons, it was necessary to operate square roots.

Portugal to act as interpreter, even though the ambassador spoke Turkish and in Spain there was an official translator of that language. Perhaps Tomás made the mistake of bringing his wife along with him. The Persian ambassador was so attracted to her that he scarcely allowed her to leave his bed, despite objections from Tomás. We know that during their stay in Spain the translator for the Persians was not Tomás but Diego de Urrea. One of Husayn's objectives in Lisbon was to embark a great amount of arms, and he was allowed to do so by the king.

In September 1601 – at the same time that the embassy of Francisco da Costa was being prepared in Rome – the Council of State of Philip III decided that, in response to the embassy of Husayn `Ali Beg, some Castilian Jesuits should be sent to Persia as ambassadors. These would be chosen by Fernando Niño de Guevara, Cardinal of Seville and Inquisitor General and member of the Council of State. He should come to an agreement with the Provincial of the Order in Castile on the choice of whom to send. A Portuguese noble was also to be included. In principle this was to be Don Antonio de Escobar, but the person who finally went was Don Luis Pereyra de la Cerda⁶⁸. The Jesuits who were chosen were Fathers Francisco Girón and Gonzalo del Río. However, they never sailed from Lisbon as the Jesuit mission was cancelled. On the other hand, we do know that Don Luis Pereyra departed for Persia in 1603 and arrived there the following year. The orders were given precisely at the same time as the conversion of the three nobles who had arrived accompanying the Persian ambassador. Nevertheless, the possibility of their accompanying him on this diplomatic mission was not considered⁶⁹. Given the serious tensions between Augustinians and Jesuits, the pope was of the opinion that some Capuchins should also go, so that the Catholic mission would have greater chances of success⁷⁰. The Augustinians were also opposed to the presence of Carmelites. The most renowned Carmelite mission was that of 1621, whose activity was published in 1626. It is striking that the Carmelites made use of a book written in Persian by the Jesuits to set up theological talks with the Muslim jurists. The book was called *Espejo que muestra el verdadero*. According to the Carmelites, it had been drawn up by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus who dwelt in the state of the Great Mogul and it dealt with God as both one and part of the Trinity, and insisted on the need for the incarnation of the Eternal Word, as well as on the fact that the Koran could neither be a book of God nor supercede the Holy Scriptures⁷¹.

⁶⁸ AGS. E. 2636. *Consulta del consejo de estado sobre cosas de Persia*, Valladolid, 7 September 1601.

⁶⁹ *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu* (ARSI). Cast. 6, 406v. Aquaviva al procurador Francisco Valdivieso, en Valladolid, Roma, 22 January 1602. '...I add this to the other to say two things to Your Reverence, the first is that with this I am sending you an instruction to be given to the Fathers who are to accompany the Persian ambassador, but Your Reverence should first show it to Señor Duque de Lerma so that he can see if anything is to be removed or anything to be added and as His Excellency [the Duke of Lerma] says, so shall it be done...'. AGS. E. 191. Philip III to Cristóbal de Moura, Valladolid, 6 March 1602.

⁷⁰ AGS. K. 1631, 217. Duque de Sessa a Felipe III, Roma, 25 November 1602.

⁷¹ Archivo del Palacio Real de Madrid (APR), Descalzas Reales, Caja 23, Exp.4. Fray Próspero del Espíritu Santo, *Breve suma de la Historia de los sucesos de la Misión de Persia de los Carmelitas Descalzos del año de 1621 hasta el de 1624*, Madrid 1626, 12 pp. This is the *Speculum Veritatis* or *Fons Vitae*, unpublished, by Fr. Jerónimo Ezpeleta (1549-1617), better known as Jerónimo Javier,

In those years – 1601 to 1603 - many complications were arising: the separate interests of the Jesuits, Augustinians, Capuchins and Carmelites became apparent, and tensions also arose between Spanish and Portuguese embassies. It is striking that, although according to our knowledge, there were no Jesuits in Persia at the beginning of the seventeenth century, nevertheless, according to a letter from a Venetian merchant residing in Isfahan, the shah had ordered their expulsion⁷².

It should be remembered, on the other hand, that, in 1600, Philip III had sent three Augustinians to Persia to request the shah to maintain the war against the Turks. But the politico-religious situation in Persia had changed when the mission sent by Clement VIII arrived in 1601. The pope cancelled the mission of Francisco da Costa on discovering that he had not acted in accordance with his instructions. The confusion was such that it could be said that no mission could be reliable. Something similar was happening on the Persian side: their different missions failed because of internal division between their members, for instance the separation and alienation between Husayn `Ali Beg and Anthony Sherley⁷³. Besides, Spain's priority at that moment lay in Ireland: 4,000 men were under siege by the English and a solution to this predicament had to be found. In a memorandum addressed to Francisco Vera y Aragón, ambassador at Venice, Sherley had already advised against the Irish undertaking and called for attention to be focused on the alliance with Persia, reinforcing the Eastern Mediterranean: 'His Majesty would have absolute control over the Adriatic Sea and could comfortably conquer Albania'⁷⁴.

Nevertheless, the shah, who had gradually become aware of the divisions and discrepancies between the Spanish and Portuguese religious missions, decided to send Francisco da Costa, who had been living for three years in Persia, as his own ambas-

nephew of the Saint. See Angel Santos, *Jerónimo Javier, Apóstol del Gran Mogol*, Pamplona, 1958, 275; Arnulf Camps OFM, *Jerome Xavier SJ and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*. Schöneck-Beckenried (Suiza), Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire, 1957, 260; Ed. MacLagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*, London 1932.

⁷² AGS. E. 1349, 172. See Gil Fernández, *El Imperio Luso-Portugués y la Persia Safávida*, vol. 1, 173.

⁷³ We have many biographical details about European travellers to Persia, particularly with the publication of their memorials and accounts of their journeys. Up until the mission of Don García de Silva y Figueroa, these missions were entrusted to Spanish and, particularly so, to Portuguese missionaries; See [H. Chick] (ed. and tr.) *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, 2 vols paginated as one, London 1939; Carlos Alonso, *Ángel María Cittadino, OP, arzobispo de Naxiwan (†1629). Una iniciativa de Propaganda Fide a favor de Armenia*, Rome, 1970; Pietro, della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il pellegrino*, 2 vols. Rome 1668; Antonio de Gouvea, *Relaçam em que se tratam as guerras e grandes victorias que alcançou o grande rey de Persia Xa Abbas do grao turco Mahometto & seu filho Amethe...*, Lisbon 1611; R. Gulbenkian, *L'ambassade en Perse de Luis Pereira de Lacerda et des Perès Portugais de l'Ordre de Saint-Augustin, Belchior dos Anjos et Guilherme de Santo Agostinho, 1604-1605*, Lisbon 1972; J. de San Miguel, *Crónica de la provincia franciscana de San Miguel*, Madrid 1989; A. Da Silva Rego, *Documentação para a história das missoes da padroado português do Oriente*, Lisbon 1955-58.

⁷⁴ Enrique García Hernán, *La cuestión irlandesa en la política internacional de Felipe II*, PhD Thesis UCM, Madrid 1999, corpus documental.

sador to Rome in 1605. De Costa arrived in the Eternal City in 1607, via Moscow⁷⁵. But it was already too late. In 1606, the emperor had signed a treaty with the Turks and Philip III would not support the Persians on the active fronts, that is, in the Mediterranean and in the Persian Gulf. By the following year, relations had deteriorated to the point where the shah was ready to expel European missionaries, persecute his Christian vassals and capture Hormuz. As a consequence of those peace treaties, many soldiers lost their employment and sought new fronts. We know through a Carmelite friar who had been in Rome at that time and who later went to Persia, that in Italy, and more specifically in Rome and Naples, a great number of French captains had gathered and had handed in a memorandum to the pope with their offer to fight in Persia against the Turks. They requested a base in Ascoli or Ancona. The Spanish authorities were very worried and handled the issue with caution since the pope had accepted the petition and attempted to obtain permission from the Count of Benavente and brought up the matter with the ambassador Marquis de Aytona.

In 1614, news arriving in Spain confirmed that persecution of the Armenian and Syrian Christians was going on in Persia and that the Carmelites and Augustinians had left the country. When they returned to Isfahan, tensions between Carmelites and Augustinians flared up again. There were a number of points of controversy which were aired in different Spanish publications between 1611 and 1624, perhaps the most emotive being that of Gouvea, in 1623, on different martyrs in Persia, one having been born in Madrid⁷⁶. The central event occurred when the shah made good on his threat by capturing Hormuz with the help of the English in 1622. In August of that same year, the goods seized at Hormuz were sold in a public auction in London, adding to the feelings of distrust in Madrid with regard to the possible match of the Prince of Wales and the Spanish Princess⁷⁷. The *Junta de Persia*, set up to prevent the

⁷⁵ Alonso, 'Una embajada de Clemente VIII a Persia'. See also the report he prepared for Pope, Clement VIII in Biblioteca Ajuda, Cod. 46-IX-22. Informação do P. Francisco da Costa, ao Papa Clemente VIII, acerca da sua missão, como embaixador na Pérsia. (*Symmicta Lusitanica*, tomo 15, fl. 433-38).

⁷⁶ Antonio de Gouvea, *Glorioso triunfo de tres mártires españoles, dos portugueses y frailes de la Orden de San Agustín, y uno castellano hijo de la Madrid*, Madrid 1623. Antonio de Gouveia, Obispo de Cirene (O.S.A.), *Relaçam em que se tratam as guerras e grandes victorias que alcaçon o grande rey da Persia... por mandado... del Rey D. Felipe segundo de Portugal fizerao alguns religiosos da Ordem dos Eremitas de S. Augustinho a Persia, composto pello padre F. Antonio de Gouvea religioso da mesma ordem...*, Impresso em Lisboa, por Pedro Crasbeeck, Madrid 1611, Real Academia de la Historia, 5/1708. *Relación cierta y verdadera de la feliz victoria y prósperos sucesos que en la India Oriental han conseguido los Portugueses, contra armadas muy poderosas de Olanda, y Persia este año de 1624, la fecha en la ciudad de Goa, cabeça de aquel Reyno a 27 de Março, del dicho año*, Madrid, en casa de Bernardino de Guzman, 1625, in BN Madrid Mss./2355.

⁷⁷ M. Fernández de Figueroa, *Conquista de las Indias de Persia e Arabia que hizo la armada del rey don Manuel de Portugal e de las muchas tierras, diversas gentes, extrañas riquezas y grandes batallas que allá hubo: en sumario del bachiller Juan Agüero de Trasmiera*; introduction, critical edition and notes by Luis Gil Fernández, Valladolid, Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial, Universidad, 1999. García de Silva Figueroa, *Epistolario diplomático*; edition and preliminary study by Luis Gil, Cáceres, Institución Cultural 'El Brocense', 1989. Also see Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago, 1974; Biblioteca

loss of Hormuz, was unable to prevent the disaster, although it did succeed in continuing to count on the Portuguese strongholds to defend its interests in the Persian Gulf, protecting the Portuguese commercial monopoly⁷⁸. Thus the men of the cloth continued their presence in those strongholds. It is still more striking that Pope Urban VIII sent a Pontifical brief to Shah `Abbas, dated 10 October 1623, whose bearer was Francisco da Costa, once again Papal legate. His mission was to obtain the restitution of the Island of Hormuz to the Portuguese⁷⁹. Meanwhile, the Persian renegades in Spain were integrating into the system of Spanish life, both at the court and in the army. This is the most apparent result of the diplomatic negotiations, an event with practical consequences, that is, the everyday presence of Persians amongst Spanish nobles and in Spanish society.

The Conversion Process

It is difficult to establish the ultimate causes that determined the conversion to Christianity of Don Juan de Persia and his companions. In fact, it seems that his book, as the title indicates, was aimed at explaining the reason for his conversion. Possibly the prevailing atmosphere could explain the reasons, though it remains unclear why the others did not embrace conversion in Rome. It is still more difficult to explain the case of the Persians who converted in their place of origin, for example, in the Carmelite mission, as described by Friar Próspero del Espíritu Santo⁸⁰.

According to his own post-hoc interpretation, scarcely credible, the Persian renegades joined the diplomatic mission because their main aim was to receive baptism. Don Juan also mentions that his conversion was miraculous: he claimed that while at an inn, he freely decided to become a Christian without anybody having spoken to him. He even goes so far as to assert that without anybody teaching him, he wrote out in Persian the principal Christian prayers – the Creed and the Commandments ‘and all the other Christian principles necessary to make a catechumen of an infidel’⁸¹. At the same time, there was nothing unusual about such claims. Jews and Muslims decided to undergo baptism and if they were nobles, the monarchs typically acted as godparents. As Diego de Guzmán remarked in 1617, acting as godparents for baptism fits into a frame of works of Christian charity which the monarchs used to comply with when Jews and Muslims converted⁸². The truth is that the administrative process con-

Real de Madrid, Ms. II/2590, 16, 32-33. Marqués de Hinojosa a Juan de Ziriza, London, 30 October 1623. ‘Sobre que no se le ha respondido al particular de la hacienda que llegó allí robada a portugueses y de los despojos de Hormuz’.

⁷⁸ AGS. Secretarías Provinciales, 1467 (1622-1624). Junta de Persia.

⁷⁹ Alonso, ‘Una embajada de Clemente VIII’.

⁸⁰ Archivo del Palacio Real de Madrid, Descalzas Reales, Caja 23, Exp.4. Fr Próspero del Espíritu Santo, *Breve suma de la Historia de los sucesos de la Misión de Persia de los Carmelitas Descalzos del año de 1621 hasta el de 1624*, Madrid 1626, 12 pp.

⁸¹ *Relaciones*, 253.

⁸² Diego de Guzmán, *Vida y muerte de Doña Margarita de Austria, reina de España*, Madrid, Luis Sánchez, 1617, 130-131. ‘Shortly after the queen left San Lorenzo, Their Majesties assisted at

ferred on nobles a pension or employment with a salary, either in one of the Armadas or in the Royal House itself. This occurred quite frequently among Greeks, Irish, English, Scotch, Albanians, Turks etc., and in general among all who suffered persecution for the sake of the faith. Perhaps one of the most famous cases was that of Muhammad Atazzi (1630-†1663), a Muslim prince from Morocco who converted to Christianity and later became a Jesuit. He preached among Turkish captives and is said to have made over 600 conversions among Muslims. He founded a confraternity in Genoa to cater to the converts. Other famous cases, also of Jesuits, include Fr. Cigala, a renegade Turk, who in fact was sent to Spain on a diplomatic mission in 1605, and the Milanese Fr. Carlo Antonio Casnedi. The list could go on with names like Don Felipe de Africa and others studied recently⁸³.

Don Juan and Don Felipe were baptised in Valladolid on 14 January 1602 and Don Diego received baptism in San Lorenzo del Escorial on 15 July 1602. Don Álvaro de Carvajal, Chaplain Major to the Palace and Greater Almsgiver, imposed a severe condition on Don Juan de Persia to qualify for an annual royal pension. In his capacity as an important authority of the Royal Chapel, Don Álvaro took charge of the organization of various Catholic missions. Thus, he was responsible for the Irish mission – the sending of missionaries to Ireland – and with these new baptisms of Persians he wanted to set up a type of Mission of Persia. Don Juan de Persia was obliged to keep a cleric at his side with the obligation that he was to continue his formation in Christianity, as the document specifies ‘to aid in husbandry and be in his company’ – in actual fact, he was to control Don Juan’s expenses⁸⁴. Don Juan carried out the mandate for thirteen years, until 1615, when he requested the king to release him from the great burden of having to pay so much for the maintenance of said cleric. The king acceded since by then Don Juan was quite versed in Christianity, he had adapted to Spanish ways, had married a Spanish woman and already had an eight-year-old daughter.

Once baptised, Don Juan went to Lisbon to seek justice for a murdered faqih and then he intended to return to Persia to bring his wife and son back to Spain with him.

a work of piety and one very much in keeping with Christian charity which was to attend and be godparents in the baptism of some Persian gentlemen who had arrived with the ambassador of Persia and converted to our faith. Such solemn baptisms are certain to be seen and the example Their Majesties give of their faith on these occasions because they normally act as godparents at these baptisms, ordering them to dress in white, the way that as of old the recently baptised dressed. Don Juan and Don Diego de Persia (as the new Christians were named) appeared in all splendour; they approached the chambers of the Queen Our Lady and they came down with Her Majesty and in a silver bowl laid on a desk, following the usual questions and ceremonies, they were baptised by Don Álvaro de Carvajal, Chaplain Major to His Majesty and official of his royal chapel. The Persians kissed Their Majesties’ hands for the favour and honour received from their hands and accompanied them back to their chambers. His Majesty, the king did this same favour and honour, at San Lorenzo, to another convert Persian, also called Don Diego, a few days later and not long before doing so for a Hebrew called Felipe Francisco and afterwards for other Moors, Jews and Gentiles.’

⁸³ Beatriz Alonso Acero, *Sultanes de Berbería en tierras de la cristiandad exilio musulmán, conversión y asimilación en la monarquía hispánica (siglos XVI y XVII)*, Barcelona 2006. See her chapter in this book.

⁸⁴ AGS. E. 1815. Cédula real, Aceza, 23 May 1602.

But he had problems with a fourth nobleman of the Persian group who had not embraced Christianity, namely, Hasan `Ali Beg. On hearing of Don Juan's conversion, Hasan wanted to kill him. This impeded his return to Persia. Some months after their baptism, Don Juan and Don Felipe obtained a substantial pension from the king, 1,200 ducats annually. Once established in Spain, they requested permission from Philip III to marry in the Christian manner, despite the fact that they were already married to Muslims⁸⁵. This involved a request for dispensation to the Holy See, but the request was denied. The king pleaded on their behalf and permission was finally granted. They probably took advantage of the Petrine Principle and the Apostolic Constitution of Gregory XIII of 1585 called *Populis*, according to which the Jesuits could absolve baptised infidels from previous marriages.

The first to marry – in the church of San Pedro in Valladolid, in 1606 – was Don Felipe, who was the nephew of the Persian ambassador. He married a noble lady, Doña Luisa de Quirós, daughter of Don Juan de Quirós and Doña María de Arce. They had a daughter, but she died in 1610. Don Felipe died around 1614 and his widow sought economic aid from the Crown on the grounds of the conversion of her husband and the death of her daughter: she met with success in this endeavour⁸⁶. Don Juan married later, also around 1606. He married María de Villarte and, in 1607, they had a daughter called Juana Bernarda de Persia, who is mentioned in a number of surviving documents⁸⁷.

In Valladolid in 1605, two of the three Persian gentlemen, Don Juan and Don Diego, were caught up in the murder of the secretary of the Persian ambassador, Bastam Quli Beg. Inquiries followed and the mayors condemned the three Persians. It is curious that in general the State counselors, who exhaustively dealt with this case, recommended that the Spanish ambassador in Persia be informed in full detail of the issue and yet his name remains unknown. They decided to rebuke the mayors regarding the improper manner in which they got rid of the body of the deceased secretary. Additionally, they conveyed the shah's letter of the dead secretary was bearing to the pope⁸⁸. They served a year and a half in jail until Francisco de Persia, another Persian convert, was arrested. Francisco was part of the embassy of Bastam Quli Beg and it was he who killed the ambassador's secretary who had struck him when he confessed his intention to become a Christian. He was baptised, but in Rome not in Valladolid. Another gentleman, a native of Ninive, accompanying Bastam Quli Beg also underwent baptism, to be renamed Tomás de Persia. He decided to follow a military career in the armada of the Duke of Medina Sidonia. In April 1606, he took part in a battle at Gibraltar against the Dutch in which he was badly wounded, losing an eye and his right arm. Although he did receive some economic aid, he did not have a permanent pension.

⁸⁵ Petición de licencia de matrimonio para don Juan and don Diego y para todos los convertidos. 1604.

⁸⁶ AGS. E. 2748. Luisa de Quirós, 30 August 1614.

⁸⁷ Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid (AHPM), 4429 y 5322. *Curaduría de Juana Bernarda de Persia, hija de don Juan de Persia y de doña María de Villarte, documentos de 1620 y 1627 respectivamente.*

⁸⁸ AGS. E. 493. Consulta del Consejo de Estado, junio 1605.

With the king's permission, Don Felipe went to Rome in 1603 and remained there practically a full year. In 1604, he requested Philip III to forward him his pension because he was receiving nothing and was in great need. Those at the court, that is Don Juan and Don Felipe, were in a similar situation and also requested the payment of their pension: 'they have no other support than that of Your Majesty, from whom they hope to receive great favours, such as those received after becoming Christians'⁸⁹.

In 1607, Don Juan and Don Diego were condemned to serve for ten years in Flanders, although they were allowed maintain their monthly pension of 100 ducats. Thanks to the mediation of Álvaro de Carvajal, the sentence was mitigated⁹⁰. It is interesting to emphasise that Fr. Remón pointed out in his dedication of *Relaciones* to Don Álvaro Carvajal that Don Juan de Persia was 'a fine soldier'. The one to come forward in his defence was the person who baptised him, the Almsgiver Major, Don Álvaro de Carvajal, who alleged to the king in January 1607 that the condemned were innocent, since Don Francisco had confessed to the crime. The carrying out of the sentence was being postponed month after month until finally its fulfillment was lifted and the annual pension they had been assigned was not withdrawn⁹¹.

In the documentary sources of *Consejo y Juntas de Hacienda* at the Simancas Archive, we find numerous petitions from these Persians, requesting payment of what was promised them from the General Treasury. Finally, the king ordered that the money be withdrawn from the funds of 'general undertakings', where 30,000 ducats from the income of the Monastery of St Peter of Valladolid had been put aside for the payment of assignments. This was an auxiliary fund for foreigners who converted or gave their services to the Crown⁹².

Another Persian ambassador, called Imam Quli Beg, arrived at the court in 1608. He came via Lisbon where two Persians had converted and were baptised and rechristened Don Manuel Bautista de Persia and Don Francisco de Persia. They turned up at the court in search of some type of remunerative employment, that is, 'a favour of some endowment'. One was granted a salary of 35 escudos and the other received 29 escudos, in both cases for employment in the *Armada de Nápoles*, close to the viceroy. Manuel Bautista requested to be assigned to the *Armada de Lisboa* and the king authorised the change in 1615. The documents concerning the expenses of this ambassador in the court are extant. Furthermore, the king ordered that the converted

⁸⁹ AGS. CJH 449. 6 y 15 December 1604.

⁹⁰ AGS. CC 911, 110. Don Juan and Don Diego de Persia, Persian gentlemen have been released from jail by the mayors, having to serve H.M. ten years in Flanders without pay, even though they are not to blame for the death of the Persian, as the Persian Don Francisco has declared . . . I beg Your Majesty to order that the memorial sent to the Chamber Council be examined and to grant them favour in what they request, which will be in the service of Our Lord and will be doing justice and a great favour to me. 22 January 1607. D. Alvaro de Carvajal. Note: Their obligation to go to Flanders as soldiers, postponed for another thirty days.

⁹¹ AGS. Cámara de Castilla, 911, 110. Memorial de don Álvaro de Carvajal, 22 enero 1607. Vid AGS. Cámara de Castilla, 948, 81.

⁹² AGS. CJH 459. 10 May 1606. Don Juan, Don Diego and Don Felipe were to be paid. Lerma ordered the payment AGS. CJH 444. 12 September 1602.

Persians be immediately paid a pension. The money was to be handed over to Álvaro de Carvajal⁹³.

The Duke of Lerma was developing a policy favourable to the Persians who converted. This explains the many letters from the duke to the president of the Council of the Treasury ordering aid to these converts. Apart from the afore-mentioned letter, we may also refer to one from 1608 in which the duke orders 200 ducats to be given to Álvaro de Carvajal 'so that he can pass them on to the two Persians who had embraced our holy faith and are leaving for Naples on endowments, in order to serve as a favour for the journey'⁹⁴. He was referring to Francisco de Persia who enjoyed a pension of 35 ducats in Naples and Manuel Bautista who received one of 20 ducats in the same place: they received 100 ducats each for the journey⁹⁵. Álvaro de Carvajal entrusted their catechesis to the monastery of San Felipe de Madrid.

During this embassy of 1608, Don Juan de Persia had particular prominence, since it was he who acted as mediator. From a query of his to the Chamber Council, we learn that these ambassadors had been to Germany and France. The king ordered that they be given money to embark in Lisbon with the viceroy of India. A passport for the transit to Portugal had to be paid for and as this had to be done quickly, Don Juan acted as the guarantee for the visas. As the Crown was not paying, the controller of the dry ports (frontiers) demanded the money from Don Juan, who pleaded with the court, which finally agreed to pay. These documents also list the belongings of the ambassador which, as well as containing silver and gold, included twelve fully equipped arquebuses⁹⁶.

Various Persian noblemen who embraced Christianity in the diplomatic embassy led by Robert Sherley and Dengiz (Jangiz) Beg in 1611 were also present: these were Don Diego and Don Felipe – not to be confused with the former of the same names – Don Pedro and Don Antonio de Persia. They had received appointments in Lisbon with a remuneration of 30 escudos. Don Felipe, who was the ambassador's secretary, stayed in Madrid and married Doña Juana Ruiz in 1612, but he died in 1614⁹⁷.

The Protocol Archive of Madrid holds a number of documents involving Don Juan, Don Diego and Don Felipe in which they give power of attorney to different people, authorising them to draw their pensions from the king in their names, a total of 1,200 ducats. Certain privileges went along with those pensions, such as disposing

⁹³ AGS. CJH 485. Madrid, 14 March 1608. His Majesty orders that Your honour order that 360 ducats from the money be paid as soon as possible to Don Alvaro de Carvajal for the maintenance of the two Persians who have become Christians and are to receive catechesis in the monastery of San Felipe of this city and so that they can purchase beds to sleep in and that they be given some travel money for the journey to their places of appointments'. See also, AGS. E. 1986 y 1987 y 1615. AGS CJH. 485. Lerma, 17 June 1608.

⁹⁴ AGS. CJH 485. Lerma, 16 July 1608.

⁹⁵ AGS CJH. 485. Lerma, 17 June 1608.

⁹⁶ AGS. CC. 948, 81. 11 February 1609. 'First of all, an ebony desk with gilt silver fittings, it had two small solid gold lions and a clock on top, 500 ducats worth of jewels and gold chains, plus 80 frames of embossed silver, plus twelve fully equipped arquebuses, plus an initialled and gilt armour body, plus a trunk of clothing for themselves, plus another trunk for the servants, plus 4,000 reales in money for their expenses on the way.' The secretary of the Chamber, Don Tomás de Angulo, intervened in favour of Don Juan de Persia.

⁹⁷ AGS. E. 2748. Madrid, 12 June 1614.



of 'a dwelling abode, doctor and apothecary' and carrying the obligation of attending close to the royal person. Other details also appear: for instance, Don Diego signed an agreement with a money-lender for an advance of part of his pension, and Don Juan, perhaps better off economically than the others, lent money both to Don Diego and Don Felipe⁹⁸.

Don Diego's career path was spectacular: He was named gentleman-in-waiting of the Royal Chamber and had enough income to afford a coach and two horses at the court, a question of honour and authority. To be able to parade through the court in a horse-drawn coach was a sign of real power⁹⁹. In 1609, don Diego took part in a duel with the famous Salas Barbadillo, in which he was injured with a knife wound¹⁰⁰. Five years later he took part, with four soldiers at his expense, in the expedition to Larache against the Barbary pirates. He received rapid promotion and in 1621 requested *plaza de contino* (important roll at court), alleging that he had served in the Battle of the Mamora and that there were no other Persian at the court (though this was not true) and that, moreover, he mastered both the Persian and Turkish languages. The king appointed him *contino* in 1622. In April of that year, he requested the honour of the habit of Knight of Santiago from the king. There was opposition because his genealogy was not clear. His best defender was Don Baltasar de Zúñiga who took the matter to the Council of Orders, but the marquis of Caracena opposed the petition¹⁰¹.

Since he did not succeed in the attempt, in 1628 he requested that as gentleman-in-waiting he be allowed to attend close to the royal person, 'so that the king would understand that in his land His Majesty is honoured' and the king acceded. In 1629, he made another request for the habit of Santiago, but once again it was rejected because of the opposition of Don Juan de Villela and the Marquis de Flores¹⁰². In 1636, Diego de Persia joined the call to arms of the nobles by the king, but that undertaking was cancelled. This is the last reference to be found on the distinguished Persian¹⁰³.

More Persians arrived at the court with Robert Sherley and Dengiz Beg in 1610. Lerma assigned matters referring to Anthony Sherley and everything involving Persia to Fr. Creswell. The underlying problem was the tension between Portuguese and Castilians with regard to Persia. Given this situation the Jesuit adopted a position of citizen of the world: 'For some twenty years or more, I do not consider myself of any one nation, I am neither Portuguese nor Castilian but a friend of both, a vassal of Jesus Christ and a servant of all his friends and neither esteem nor hold any other for

⁹⁸ AHPM. 1954. 'Don Diego de Persia. Carta de pago de la pensión que recibe del rey, 1607'. AHPM, 4615, 76. 'Poder de Don Diego de Persia para poder cobrar las rentas del rey, 12 February 1614'. AHPM. 2319, 739. 'Escritura de obligación, 1620. AHPM. 1854. Juan de Persia, carta de pago de la pensión que recibe del rey, 13 March 1607'. AHPM, 3486, 173; 1857, 1658, 3082, 4102, 5760. 'Cartas de pago de don Juan de Persia'.

⁹⁹ A. López Álvarez, *Poder, lujo y conflicto en la corte de los Austrias. Coches, carrozas y sillas de mano, 1550-1700*, Madrid 2007.

¹⁰⁰ AGS. E. 1649, 98. The process was published by Ugahon in 1894.

¹⁰¹ Biblioteca de la Universidad de Salamanca, Ms. 1925, 14, ff. 29-31. Baltasar de Zúñiga to Marqués de Caracena, Aranjuez, 14 April 1622. 'Sobre el hábito de la Orden de Santiago que S.M. quería dar al embajador de Persia, Madrid 16 April 1622'.

¹⁰² AGS. E. 2756. Memorial, 1 February 1629.

¹⁰³ APR. Personal, Caja 827, exp. 16. Don Diego de Persia.



my nation'. In sum, it was no longer time for war between Portuguese and Castilians because 'all are now under one law, one king and one head'. The crucial issue was to expel the Dutch from India because of the harm they were causing to the trade of salt, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, etc. But it would be a mistake to allow the Persians to grow in strength because they would end up confronting the king. He makes a truly prophetic affirmation: 'It is a lesser evil to avail of the help of the Persians to defeat the Turks, because they are the greatest enemy of Christianity, more than the Persians could be against Hormuz'. An alliance between Persians and Turks designed to attack the Monarchy and make war in India had to be avoided. Creswell's proposal was to ally with the shah to impede the trade of the Dutch and the English and to aid the Portuguese to expel them from there. The problem was that the Dutch and English had already obtained trade concessions from Shah `Abbas, and that their ships sailed to the Red Sea, the Moluccas, China and Japan. The king should allow the Castilians to voyage from Lisbon to Hormuz. The key lay in the fact that the Old Christians hated the *Conversos* and Jews who were the ones controlling the trade. Some Portuguese affirmed that they would prefer to see heretics enter India before Castilians. They wondered: why can't Portuguese Old Christians and nobles in Lisbon or in Madrid do what the converted and fugitive Jews from Portugal in Amsterdam are doing; why do they have to be inferior to them?¹⁰⁴ This is a judgment similar to that of the Count Malvezzi at the beginning of the reign of Philip IV, that is, that the captains of Hormuz, rather than soldiers, were merchants pursuing their own interests.

Philip III was greatly alarmed at the exorbitant expenses of this embassy in 1611 and asked that they leave the court as soon as possible. According to the accountants, in a mere four months, between February and May, the embassy had spent 12,000 ducats, of which the Crown had only paid 1,500. There was no money left and the providers refused to supply more. The situation was unsustainable and the Council of the Treasury intervened and decided that the sooner they left the court, the better for all¹⁰⁵. But the embassy returned to the court in February 1611, creating a nightmare for the accountants. Shortly after its arrival, an order was given to provide its members with 3,000 ducats for their lodging. As they were heading for Rome, an attempt was made to deal with matters as swiftly as possible. Thus Lerma ordered: 'the quicker they are dealt with, the greater the expense on them, which is a lot, will be saved'¹⁰⁶. For the same reason, it was ordered that a passport be prepared immediately so that they could pass through Aragón. Thanks to this document, we know the value of the belongings they carried along with them: a cutlass and a dagger with harness of gold and jewels, plumes, silk cloths, pearl necklaces, ten emerald rings and 500 silver ones, and a gold

¹⁰⁴ AGS. E. 494. Lerma to Andrés de Prada, Madrid 11 March 1611. Memorial of Joseph Creswell SJ.

¹⁰⁵ AGS. CJH, 495. The accountant Jerónimo de Quincoces informed Lerma and yet the latter continued to order the payment of all the expenses, 5 May 1610. Quincoces said: 'the officials cannot find anybody to trust them with credit and the owners of the beds and clothing are freely demanding satisfaction, fearful of impayment. It is necessary to provide funds to pay for what they have incurred in debts and for forthcoming expenses so that there is no great scandal as would arise with the embassy and the court involved'.

¹⁰⁶ AGS. CJH, 505. Pardo, 16 February 1611 and 23 March 1611.

chain worth 1,000 reales¹⁰⁷. Besides, Philip II wanted to make a present of a box of arms made in Milan. They travelled via Genoa, Cartagena and Lisbon, from where they were to go to Persia with Sergeant Baltasar de Arévalo¹⁰⁸. This decision should perhaps be seen in the light of the proposal of the Carmelite, Friar Pablo Simón, the pope's envoy, for the king to send military experts to train the Persians: 'His Holiness offered to send some soldiers to the king of Persia who had made such a request to his ancestor, Clement VIII, for the training of his troops . . . His Holiness wishes that you send them and that they be persons of full confidence, since there has been no shortage of people going there and doing harm to Christianity and to Your Majesty as has happened by not sending them when they were requested, since, in the meantime, English, Dutch and French heretics have gone there'. His proposal was for veteran soldiers, residing in Naples, 'good Christians', to be sent to Persia¹⁰⁹.

The new Christians were assigned to the Lisbon Armada with a monthly remuneration of 30 escudos. According to query to the Council of State, Don Álvaro de Carvajal should undertake the question of their baptism as happened in the other cases. Don Diego joined the armada, but Don Felipe remained in Madrid with a higher salary, 40 escudos per month. The latter married Doña Juana Ruiz and died two years later. Doña Juana was the daughter of a servant of the king who, considering the marriage she was to undertake, granted her a dowry of 200 ducats. He also had dealings with Don Juan de Persia, author of the *Relaciones*, in fact he owed him money. The marriage was celebrated in the parish of San Martín in Madrid, with Cristóbal de Leiva (who had a university degree) and Don Juan de Persia as witnesses. Don Felipe died in Madrid on 20 May 1614¹¹⁰.

If we analyse his will and compare it with others of the period, we see that Don Felipe does not follow the same confessional pattern, especially with regard to the Eucharist, the Catholic Church and devotion to the saints, but that he goes directly to the essentials, that is, his belief in the Trinity and in the Redemption. As for his debts, it is striking that he owed money to a servant of Don Juan de Idiáquez, who was one of the king's keenest counselors in attempting to establish the Persians in Spain. He also mentions a monetary debt to a Persian called Juan de Utrera, who otherwise remains unknown. On the other hand, he was owed money by Don Juan de Persia, Don Diego de Persia and one of the king's archers. It is worth pointing out that, in his house, he possessed paintings of the royal family and portraits, both of himself, his wife and another woman, perhaps his wife in Persia. This latter could be significant, since we have very few portraits of early-sixteenth-century Persian women; the best known are twelve pictures of Persian women held in Corpus Christi College Valencia, among pictures of Persians, Armenians, Georgians, nobles, soldiers, merchants, etc.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Consejo de Aragón, leg 53.3, 19. Madrid 29 March 1611.

¹⁰⁸ AGS. E. 512. Madrid 22 September 1612. 200 ducats were to be given to take the lot to Lisbon 'some arms and other things of the king of Persia that are there'. AGS. e. 1953, 53. See AGS. E. 1301 (61). The arms were under the care of Jerónimo Solari and were handed over to Juan Viñas, in AGS. E. 1302 (6).

¹⁰⁹ AGS. E. 493. Fr Pablo Simón to Philip III.

¹¹⁰ AHPM, 3590, 759. Testamento de don Felipe de Persia.

¹¹¹ A comparison can also be made with other wills of renegades in Beatriz Alonso Acero, *Sultanes de Berbería en tierras de la cristiandad exilio musulmán, conversión y asimilación en la*

Thanks to the will, a key person in the conversion of the Persians may be identified, namely a Venetian merchant called Nicolao Clavel who lived in Lisbon. Don Juan remarks in his *Relaciones* that this Venetian spoke Turkish and that he did everything possible to persuade the Persians, Don Juan himself included, to embrace Christianity. Once when Clavel was explaining the descent of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, a white dove entered the room and perched among them. This also encouraged Don Diego to become a Christian. Don Felipe's will also mentions that an Armenian Christian, who had gone to Persia on orders from Philip III, placed into Nicolao Clavel's hands clothes that belonged to him. He had left a memorandum written in Persian in the clothes.

Other Persians appear in the documentation in the Protocol Archive as well. There is a Fernando de Persia, a Persian gentleman who gave power of attorney in Madrid to a Spanish friend so that a certain rent owed to him by the Princess of Ascoli could be drawn¹¹². The oddest claim is that of Don Fernando receiving the habit as Knight of Santiago, something that cannot be confirmed on the basis of other sources. We also have the will of Don Juan de Persia, written in Madrid in 1650. This may be our Don Juan, the author of the *Relaciones*, who married a second time. His will tells us that he resided in La Coruña, married Mariana de Reinaldos and had five children – Juan, Pedro, Maria, Domingo and Antonio – who also bore the surname 'De Persia'. He states that he had been in the royal service for over forty years, which would enable us to set the date of his baptism around 1610, and he says he received no pension whatsoever. This will is quite dissimilar to the former one, since it is totally in line with the prototype of the Spanish Catholic of the period¹¹³.

We know from Friar Pablo Simón that Shah `Abbas was not satisfied with the numerous embassies sent to his court. The problem was not the conversion of some Persians but that they allowed themselves to be seduced by the many presents they received, which caused scandal: 'seeing that the many embassies sent bore little fruit since the ambassadors were interested in receiving presents there, and ours here, and causing scandals'. The best solution was to send a permanent ambassador to Persia; his qualities were to be: 'a man of quality, prudent, a good Christian, zealous of the glory of God, not Portuguese, since that name was badly received there due to the grievances caused to the Persians by the Portuguese in Hormuz and so that he could faithfully inform His Majesty of what was happening in the Indies'. The ambassador should be well provided with money to avoid being bribed and thus 'remove the stains of the baseness and infamy committed by others, dirtying their hands, receiving 400 or 500 ducats'. Friar Pablo Simón was referring particularly to Luis Pereira de la Cerda.

And then there is the embassy of Don García de Silva of 1614, a well-studied case. From our perspective, we can mention that there was another candidate for that embassy, namely the Flemish Jorge de Henin, who had been an agent for the king at

monarquía hispánica (siglos XVI y XVII), Barcelona 2006. Regarding the portraits of Persian women, see Fernando Benito, *Catálogo de Pinturas del Museo del Patriarca*, Valencia 1980.

¹¹² AHPM. 2511, 'Poder de don Fernando de Persia, 26 June 1600'.

¹¹³ AHPM. 8639, 578 a 591. 'Testamento de don Juan de Persia, 11 November 1650'.

the court of the Sultan of Morocco between 1600 and 1615 and who later would be attached to the embassy of London of Diego Sarmiento de Acuña and Don Carlos Coloma as secretary and translator. Many of his memoranda on the Persian questions of 1614 are extant. Above all they attack the Sherley brothers as traitors. In one he states, using the claims made in Juan de Persia's *Relaciones*, that Anthony Sherley tried to kill Friar Nicolás de Melo¹¹⁴. He suggests to the king that, given the important new developments at the court following the departure of García de Silva, it was advisable to send a new ambassador: 'It would seem proper to send a new one to the king of Persia to let him know what has been referred to here . . . so far, there is no confirmation whether or not Don García de Silva has arrived at the court of Persia, only that he arrived from Goa to Hormuz, or whether he made it to Isfahan. As so many new events have taken place since his departure from this court, it may be that it is to the benefit of the service of Your Majesty that you send him the details of his commitments or issue him with new instructions in accordance with what has taken place here . . . and if you consider me to be suitable, I would very willingly go . . . the journey could be covered in eight months, either through Aleppo, through Babilonia [Baghdad] and Tana, or through Poland, Poddka, Cafa, Trasipond [Trabzon] and Turkomonía, or via Moscovia, Estacar [Astrakhan] and the Caspian Sea'.

Pursuing a policy of benevolent hospitality by moving the Persian renegades into positions close to the king, the Spanish Monarchy was taking in these Persians to 'serve' the Crown. The *Junta de Bureo* (an administrative committee) was aware of this circumstance and hence a memorandum addressed to the king clearly laid out the political line to be continued by Philip IV, namely that of favouring the Persians: 'that following in his footsteps [those of Philip III], Your Majesty should continue as a Catholic prince so that others from foreign and infidel nations, moved by your example, will be inclined to desire the service of this Royal Crown and embrace our sacred religion'.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the only significant step taken by the king was to set up a *Junta de Persia* in 1620. This, however, did not preclude the loss of Hormuz in 1622. Although it was a collective Hispano-Portuguese board, the Spanish ministers held the greatest political sway and decision-making power, despite the fact that the said Junta was dependent on the Council of Portugal. The Junta's primary concern was to ensure the defence of the Monarchy in the Persian Gulf, protecting the Iberian trade monopoly by maintaining the Portuguese strongholds in the Gulf. The renegade Persians in the service of the Monarchy do not appear in any war situation in the region, they rather took part in the Mediterranean front and in specific enclaves.

¹¹⁴ AHN. Nobleza. Frías, 25/39. Memoriales de Jorge de Henin. '...sailing on the Volga, he kept Friar Nicolás de Melo in the lower deck of a galley in order to kill him for the Persians. They saved him from his hands according to Don Juan de Persia who was present and in a book published in Valladolid on that voyage certifies that Don Antonio came to finish off Friar Nicolás de Melo, and that the other Franciscan Friar disappeared and that he stole from the ambassador thirty-two coffers containing presents from the king of Persia for the Christian princes . . . For more information with respect to Sherley's behaviour, see the Don Juan de Persia, *Relaciones*, 119, 120, 137, 138, 140, 142, 156, 157 and 158'.

¹¹⁵ AGP. Personal, caja 827, exp. 16. Bureo to Philip IV, Madrid, 4 February 1628.

Within the peninsula, they established a presence in Lisbon and in La Coruña¹¹⁶. A similar case is that of Don José de Persia, who became a captain in Sicily and who was pensioned with the post of Master of Customs of Messina after he was disabled in 1679¹¹⁷. It seems that these Persians did not wish to return to the milieu from which they came and preferred to serve inside the Monarchy in any capacity and not in more risky posts. This meant that they were living in the world of the frontier, precisely what they wished to avoid thanks to their conversion.

Documental Appendix

1. *Archivo de Protocolos de Madrid: 3590, 759. Will of Don Felipe de Persia*

In the Name of God, Amen. Let all who see this know that I, Don Felipe de Persia, living at this court and in the city of Madrid, ill in bed with a physical illness that God, Our Lord, has seen fit to give me, but of a sound mind and natural understanding, believing as I believe in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are three persons and one true God and taking as I take for my intercessor and lawyer the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Our Lord, so that she intercedes for me before her precious Son, guide my soul in the journey of salvation, honour, service and his, I make and order this my will and testament in the following manner and form.

In the first place, I commend my soul to God, Our Lord, who created it and redeemed it by his precious blood, death and passion and my body to the earth for which it was formed.

Item: I order, that when the will of God, Our Lord, sees fit to take me, that my body be buried in the church of St Martin, in the part and place commanded by my executors.

Item: I order, that the day after my burial, or if not, the next day, a sung mass with deacon and subdeacon and the vigil of three readings be celebrated, and that twelve members of the clergy of the parish accompany me with any other accompaniment desired by that my executors.

Item: I order that masses be offered for my soul in a number deemed possible by my executors on the basis of my belongings as will remain once the dowry of Doña Juana Ruiz, my wife, is paid, according to her letter of dowry. And besides the goods appearing there as dowry goods of my said wife, I have got 200 ducats more of the dowry His Majesty endowed her with, as daughter of a servant of His Majesty.

Item: I declare that I owe a clothes merchant called Mata certain supplies of dresses that figure in the books of said person and that is signed by me, totaling 960 reales and I order them to be paid.

Item: twelve (illegible) that I owe to Francisco Lumendi, servant of Don Juan Idiáquez; I order he be paid 159 reales.

Item: I declare that I owe a silversmith, whose name I do not know, 28 reales. I order them to be paid.

Item: I declare that I owe a Portuguese man 18 reales for linen and also I owe a hosier 9 reales and 10 reales to another Portuguese person. I also owe Juan de Salas who lives on de Silva Street 14 reales. I order all these to be paid.

Item: I owe a Persian called Juan de Autrera 105 reales for a dowry account and two months' sustenance since the demand has been lodged.

Item: I declare that Don Juan de Persia owes me the 200 reales I lent him and the said Don Juan de Persia being present admitted he owed me those 200 reales; recover them from him.

Item: Don Juan de Liste, archer of His Majesty, owes me 48 reales. I order their recovery.

Item: Don Diego de Persia owes me 14 reales.

¹¹⁶ The documentation on this Junta is to be found in AGS. Secretarías Provinciales, 1467 (1622-1624). Junta de Persia.

¹¹⁷ AGS. E. 2530. Report of Don José de Persia.

Item: I declare that of the favour His Majesty endowed me with, he owes me all this month of May, I order it to be obtained.

Item: I order for the pious and honorary charges ...

I separate them from the right they may have to my goods.

And to fulfill and pay this my will and the orders in it, I name as my executors Don Juan de Persia, Miguel Juan and Doña Juana Ruiz, my wife, neighbours of this city, to whom and each one *in solidum* I give my authorization so that:

All my goods be sold at public auction or outside it and from the value they fulfill and pay this my will and its orders and legacies. And once paid this my will and the orders, I name my soul as universal inheritor so that they offer masses and sacrifices for it.

I revoke and annul and declare of no value or effect all other testaments, wills or codicils which I have made prior to this one. In the city of Madrid on the 18th day of May 1614, in the presence of the witnesses Agustín de Ortega and Juan Gutiérrez and Don Juan de la Fresneda y Cristóbal Emerte and Juan de Lucena present in this court ...

Furthermore, the declarer added that Giusepe Armero, who went to Persia on His Majesty's business, had left an Indian basket containing a used purple cape, some clothing of the same cloth, old breeches in the care of Nicolao Clavel. All this is in his care as I have written in Persian characters. I order that when the said person returns it be given back. Witnesses being ...

'And on his petition, I sign, Juan de Fresneda.

Goods:

A large portrait of the deceased and another of his wife.

A representation of Saint Catherine.

A large image of Our Lord with a gilt frame.

A portrait of a Persian woman.

Eight portraits of the house of Austria.

A foreign sword with equipment and scabbard.

2. Archivo de Protocolos de Madrid, 8639, 578 to 591. Will of Juan de Persia, 11 November 1650

In the Name of God, Amen. Let all who see this last will and testament, as I Juan de Persia do, of the Persian nation and resident in this court and a neighbour of the city of La Coruña and married *in facie ecclesie* with Marina de Renaldos, being as I am at present ill with an illness God saw fit to send me and being attended to in the General Hospital of this city in the ward of St. Joseph in bed number 26. Though physically ill, I am healthy in my judgment and natural understanding, believing as I firmly believe in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three different persons and one true God and in all that our holy mother the Roman Catholic Church believes and confesses, under whose protection I have lived and endeavour to live and die with the divine help, taking as I take for my intercessors, the Holy Mystery of the Holy Sacrament and the ever Virgin Mary, mother of God and Our Lady and the most glorious patriarch, St. Joseph, and the glorious apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Francis and St. Anthony of Padua and the saint of my name and the saints of the celestial court whom I beseech to all be my lawyers with God Our Lord to plead that he forgive my sins by the merits of his passion and blood . . . I wish to make my last will and testament and make it in the following form and manner...

