



## AŠTARAK

---

**AŠTARAK**, a village in the Ābārān district about six miles northwest of Yerevan (Iravān) in a mountainous region of the Caucasus; in Moḥarram 1243/August 1827 the site of a Persian victory in the second Russo-Persian war; also known as the battle of Oshakan (Awšakān). The Russian commander-in-chief, Ivan Fedorovich Paskevich, who had been forced to lift the siege of Yerevan on 6 Du'l-ḥejja 1242/1 July 1827, marched on Nakhichevan (Naḵjavān), sending his wounded to the monastery at Echmiadzin (Uč Kelisā) in violation of its neutral status, which had been guaranteed by the 1813 treaty of **Golestān**. The Persian commander-in-chief, crown prince 'Abbās Mirzā, who planned to advance via Gomri (Leninakan, formerly Aleksandropol') on Tiflis (Tbilisi), besieged the monastery in the middle of August. He was informed that a Russian relief force of about 5,000 infantry, 1,000 cavalry (according to Russian reports, no more than 3,000 troops in all), and twelve guns, under the command of General Afanasii Ivanovich Krasovskii, was advancing from the northwest. 'Abbās Mirzā left two of his lieutenants, Yusof Khan Gorji and Sohrāb Khan Gorji, to prosecute the siege, and himself led the bulk of the army (ca. 5,000 infantry and almost as many cavalry) to meet the Russians. The engagement took place at Aštarak on 29 August (17 August Old Style).

The Russian troops were drawn up in squares. The Persian artillery, commanded by Ḥosayn Khan Sardār Iravānī, opened fire, and the Persian infantry, advancing in accordance with its European training, threw the Russians into disorder. They retreated, only to be intercepted and nearly routed by cavalry led by 'Abbās Mirzā. Despite express orders from the prince,



many of the dead and wounded Russian soldiers were decapitated by Persian troops, which dissuaded the remaining Russians from surrendering. Altogether the Russians lost between 1,154 and 3,200 men, six guns, and almost all their equipment. Krasovskii was wounded but managed to reach Echmiadzin with the rest of his army. Persian casualties amounted to about 400 killed and 600 wounded (India Office, London: MacDonald to Swinton, Camp at Soorab, 22 September 1827, quoting an intercepted letter from Krasovskii to Paskevich; Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 669-71; Baddeley, pp. 166-69). The ensuing demoralization of the Russians obliged Paskevich to postpone his invasion of Azarbaijan, though this was successfully resumed a month later.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

(for cited works not given in detail, see “Short References”):

John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, London, 1908, repr. New York, 1969.

George A. Bournoutian, ed., *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia, 1797-1889. A Documentary Record*, Costa Mesa, Cal., 1998, pp. 268-71.

Kamran Ekbal, “Die Briefwechsel Abbas Mirzas mit dem britischen Gesandten MacDonald Kinneir im Zeichen des zweiten russisch-persischen Krieges (1825-28).

Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der persisch-englischen Beziehungen in der frühen Kadscharenzeit,” *Islamkundliche Untersuchungen* 43, 1977, pp. 78-79, 162-63.

Faḡl-Allāh Kāvārī Šīrāzī, *Tārīk-e Du’l-Qarnayn*, Ms. British Library Or. 3527 (1248 /1832-33), fols. 247v-248r.

*Search terms:*

□□□□ ashtarak

