



ELTON, JOHN

ELTON, Captain **JOHN** (?-1751), English merchant, seaman and shipbuilder for Nāder Shah Afšār. From 1734 onward the British merchants of the Russia Company were permitted to transit Russia to trade with Persia, crossing the Caspian Sea in Russian vessels. In 1739 Elton, an “enterprising but indiscreet Englishman” (Malcolm, II, p. 102) arrived at Estarābād (Astarābād) and secured the royal assent to market goods directly in Persia, bypassing the shah’s middlemen. Elton next resolved to challenge Russia’s monopoly of navigation on the Caspian Sea. In 1742 he built several vessels at Kazan and, with a mixed British and Russian crew, sailed to Anzalī (q.v.) with a cargo of British goods.

He was taken into service by Nāder Shah, for whom he twice transported supplies to Baku (q.v.) and surveyed the southern coast of Dāġestān in readiness for a campaign against the Lazgis. In 1747 Nāder was killed and his plans for a Caspian fleet evaporated. In the ensuing anarchy, all the British trading posts and goods in northern Persia were lost. Elton apparently offered his services to Moḡammad-Ḥasan Khan Qājār. In April 1751 he was captured by Ḥājj Jamāl Fūmanī, the governor of Gīlān, after refusing to help defend Rašt against a Qajar advance, and was later shot dead.



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