



## FABRITIUS, LUDVIG

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**FABRITIUS, LUDVIG (LODEWYCK)**, Swedish envoy to the Safavid court (b. 1648 in Brazil, of Dutch parentage; d. 1729 in Stockholm). Fabritius headed three missions to Persia representing the Swedish crown in 1679-80, 1683-84, and 1697-1700.

Fabritius came to Moscow with his stepfather in 1660 or 1661 and subsequently pursued a career as an officer in the Russian army. He took part in a number of campaigns until he was captured in 1670 while fighting the Cossack forces of Stenka Razin (Fabritius, p. 75). After three months in captivity he escaped from Astrakhan, was enslaved by Tatars, regained his freedom, and wound up in Persia in the company of other Dutch refugees (Butler, pp. 21-32). Arriving in Isfahan, Fabritius was offered a position in the Dutch East India Company. He declined, however, and in 1672 returned to Russia. Back in Russia Fabritius may have been involved in the initiative led by the Dutchman Coenraad van Klenck, to establish a regular transit trade between Persia and Europe via Russia. He seems to have paid a second visit to Isfahan in 1676 on that account (Scheltema, I, pp. 337-408). A year later he resigned from Russian military service and moved to Sweden.

Fabritius's official diplomatic career began in the late 1670s. The background to his first mission to Persia was the opening of a transit route between Persia and Europe through Russia. In 1667 the czar granted Armenian merchants from Persia the right to ply their trade via this route. This privilege, which was renewed in modified form in 1673, contributed considerably to commercial traffic between Moscow and Arkhangelsk. Sweden reacted by devising a plan



to divert the Russian transit trade to the Baltic route, with the city of Narva as the main entrepôt. To this end, in 1678, Charles XI resolved to send a mission to Persia to establish diplomatic contacts with the Safavids. Fabritius was chosen to lead the mission. The fact that he seems to have paid for it out of his own pocket suggests that he had come to some arrangement with Armenian merchants in Persia or Moscow (Troebst, forthcoming).

The reticence of the Persian sources, scant references in western sources, and the absence of a regular correspondence on the part of Fabritius leave us with little information about this first journey. Fabritius may have arrived in Isfahan sometime in 1680, but was given audience only in the spring of the following year (Algemeen Rijksarchief, VOC 1355, 17 April 1681, fol. 395r). The credentials he submitted in September of the same year included permission for Persian merchants to enter Swedish territory, two years of exemption from tolls for them, and a Swedish commitment to build ships in the Caspian Sea. In early 1682 (i.e., after six months—the time it took to translate the documents), Shah Solaymān responded by stating that Persia’s silk would henceforth be transported via Russia and Narva, but only on condition that the country’s Armenian and other merchants would be so inclined (Algemeen Rijksarchief, VOC 1364, 6 March 1682, fol. 357). In the official response which Fabritius took back with him, the shah did not refer to issues of trade, but only thanked his Swedish counterpart for the mission (Zettersteen, doc. 214, pp. 128-29). Armenian merchants were more enthusiastic. One of them addressed a letter to King Charles XI in which he expressed willingness to try the alternative route via Novgorod and Narva; the magistrate (*kalāntar*) of Julfa expressed his interest in the ship-building project and promised that he would urge his fellow Armenians to ply the new route; and a delegation of Julfan silk merchants accompanied Fabritius on his return voyage to Sweden, where he arrived in late 1682.

After Fabritius’s return, Charles XI lost no time in commissioning him to undertake a second mission to Persia. This second trip, which began in April 1683, is relatively well documented, thanks to Fabritius’s own description and the written accounts of Engelbert Kaempfer (q.v.), the mission’s secretary. The mission arrived in Isfahan in March 1684, but was received by Shah Solaymān only in late July. Astrological advice, and perhaps the need for the court to await the outcome of negotiations with the Dutch (with whom the Persians were embroiled in armed conflict at that moment), compelled him to cool his heels before submitting his letters in September (Meier-Lemgo, p. 276). Aside



from commercial propositions, these included a Swedish proposal for Persia to join the anti-Ottoman alliance in Europe known as the Holy League. Kaempfer's published travelogue, and the protocol of Fabritius's private audience with the Shah, contain different versions of the Swedish king's message regarding his readiness to send troops to assist Persia in its struggle against the Ottomans (cf. Kaempfer, p. 266, and Haberland, p. 421). However, Shah Solaymān's pacifist inclination—motivated by a realistic assessment of the strength of his army relative to that of the Ottomans—made him decline the invitation to join the Holy League (see Matthee, forthcoming). After a three-year period during which he received Fabritius eleven times, the shah informed the Swedish envoy that he would be happy to oblige the Swedish king in all his wishes, except for the proposal to resume hostilities with the Ottomans (Fabritius, pp. 99-100). The Persians, faced with a Dutch blockade of Bandar-e 'Abbās (q.v.), showed more interest in the commercial suggestions of the mission. Yet the official results were meager in this regard as well. This time, too, it was the Julfan merchants who showed the greatest interest in the diversion of the trade route through Narva; once again, an Armenian delegation accompanied Fabritius on his way back to Stockholm (Troebst, forthcoming). The second mission led to the opening of the Narva trade route in the late 1680s, which, thanks to the logistical facilities and preferential tolls it offered, became a serious competitor to the Arkhangelsk outlet, until the outbreak of the Northern War between Russia and Sweden in 1701.

Armenian efforts in the 1690s to open a commercial transit route through Poland and the Baltic principality of Kurland led Charles XI to organize a third mission, designed to publicize the advantages of the Narva connection. This time Fabritius was to request reciprocal rights for Swedish merchants in Persia, lower toll fees, and a hostel for Swedish merchants similar to the one that accommodated Armenians in Narva. Fabritius was also to request Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn to ask the czar to grant free transit rights for Swedish merchants en route to and from Sweden. As Charles XI died just before the mission's departure, it also became Fabritius's task to notify the shah of the consequent change of rule in Sweden.

Information about this third mission is as scanty as that about the first one. Fabritius left Stockholm in May 1697, departed from Moscow on 28 September, and took more than a year to arrive in Isfahan on 8 November 1698. Aside from submitting the above-mentioned proposals, he also appears to have requested the Persians to send an embassy to Sweden (Algemeen Rijksarchief,



VOC 1603, 1 July 1699, fol. 1654v). He was successful in this, but otherwise achieved little more than an expression of friendship from Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn (see Zettersteen, doc. 218, pp. 131-32). His stay in the Safavid capital was prolonged until the spring of 1699, when he embarked on his return voyage accompanied by Sārū Khan Beg as Persian ambassador. He arrived in Stockholm on 26 May 1700. The effect of Fabritius's third journey was no more substantial than that of his first two missions. During his stay in Persia, relations between Russia and Sweden had begun to deteriorate. This process led to the outbreak of the Northern War in 1701, which effectively ended the chances of a viable trade link between Persia and Sweden through Russia.

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