



FERRIER, JOSEPH PHILIPPE

FERRIER, JOSEPH PHILIPPE (b. 12 April 1811, Lyon. d. 6 November 1886, Marseille). French soldier in the Persian service (1839-42, 1846-50). Ambitious, keen observer of political men and events, and a prolific writer, Ferrier neither succeeded in using his organizational abilities nor in obtaining the role he wanted to play in Franco-Persian relations.

During the 1830 insurrection in Lyon, he volunteered for the 2nd “regiment de carabiniers.” He was further appointed to the 1st “regiment de chasseurs d’Afrique” in Algeria. He was soon wounded and sent back to France. In 1839, while being prosecuted by his creditors, he developed a feeling for adventure. He was recruited as a military instructor by Ḥosayn Khan Ājudān-bāši (q.v.). After his attempt to conquer Herat, countered by the British (1837-38), Moḥammad Shah (q.v.) had sent Ḥosayn Khan on a diplomatic mission to Europe (1839). While in Paris, he endeavored to persuade France to supplant Britain in Persia. To replace the withdrawn British instructors, he recruited French officers and artisans. The French government did not officially intervene in this recruitment.

Under the command of Henry Boissier, “chef d’escadron,” accompanied by Ḥosayn Khan, ten lieutenants left for Persia (29 September 1839): Ferrier and Prosper Delamarre (cavalry); Théodore Boucherat, Charles Vitard, Jules Pichon, Alexandre Chauvet, Victor Chapt (infantry); François Bussières, Henry Delacroix, Noël Vergne (artillery), as well as several technicians. The sending



of this detachment was soon followed by the embassy of Comte de Sercey (see FRANCE III). Adventurers seized the opportunity to make their way to Persia. The Baron Gustave de Damas, heading an unofficial mission, followed and brought weapons bought in France on credit. Upon his arrival in Persia, this so-called Général de Damas, an ex-convict, put himself under Russian protection. Pretending to be a French secret agent, and allegedly boasting of his feat of arms in Napoleonic armies, he obtained the title of *sardār* (general) and tried to take the control of the French official mission. Being left idle and unpaid, French soldiers started to quarrel, under the eyes of British and Russian residents. Four officers went back. Only Ferrier had learnt Persian, and he imposed himself on the remaining officers. De Sercey obtained for them a new contract, and their nomination as captains (9 August 1839). Ferrier was appointed adjudant-general and “chef d’état major” with an eight-year contract (6 December 1840). He was sent to Zanjān to train cavalry battalions and was awarded with the Order of the Lion and Sun. His military mission soon revealed itself purposeless. Seeking for an official appointment from France, he abundantly reported to Maréchal Soult, Duc de Dalmatie (then Minister of War), on the political situation in Persia, the army, the Lazarist missionaries, etc. (on the Lazarist mission see: CHRISTIANITY VIII; on the schools, FRANCE XV). But given the impossibility to get paid, the declared hostility of the Russian ambassador, the Count de Medem, and the attacks of Damas, he planned to return to France. Then Mr. Goutte, a dragoman at the Russian embassy, presented to the Shah the translation of an article published in *Le Rhône* (n° 198, 10 November 1841) inspired by a private letter from Ferrier. The views expressed there on the Persian court and army entailed Ferrier’s unlimited unpaid leave (July 1842). He left, with four other officers, without any indemnity and the interdiction to pass through Baghdad, for fear he could find there an enlistment.

Back in France, he was proposed a position in the administration, or the Singapore consulate, provided that he renounced all his claims. But upon the announcement of the renewal of Franco-Persian relations, he left for Constantinople and Baghdad (September 1843). Relations were resumed in 1844 by Comte Etienne de Sartiges, and Ferrier vainly applied to him to recover his due. Having received some meager subsidies from the French government, he determined to undertake a perilous overland journey through Persia and Afghanistan to join the French officers in the Sikh service, at Lahore in the Panjab. After the Anglo-Afghan war of 1832-42 (q.v.), conditions



in Afghanistan were much disturbed. Having reached Herat with many difficulties (8 June 1845), Ferrier was suspected by Yār Moḥammad to be an English spy. After a long and perilous itinerary in Afghanistan (difficult to retrace), where he fell the prey between rival local rulers, he would return to Herat (15 November 1846) and reach Tehran (13 January). During his voyage, and particularly at the end, he sent reports on the British in Central Asia to Henry Rawlinson at Baghdad and to Justin Sheil at Tehran. He brought to Sheil a manuscript from Alexander Burnes (q.v.). He also reported to Sartiges on the political situation in Afghanistan. Although his notes had been stolen, Ferrier could draw from his memories a vivid and rich travel account. It was published much later, first in English, by H. D. Seymour, met by Ferrier (for the second time) at Pondicherry, and then in French (see bibl.).

Sartiges pressed upon Ferrier to write articles serving the French interests in various newspapers (mainly in the *Journal de Constantinople*, *Echo de l'Orient*). In exchange, he was readmitted in the Persian service as instructor. In October 1847, he was attached to the governor general of Fārs, Ḥosayn Khan Neẓām-al-Dawla, with whom he had come from France in 1839. Following Moḥammad Shah's death (September 1848), the people of Shiraz rebelled against Ḥosayn Khan. After having defended the citadel against the insurgents, Ferrier was dismissed by Ḥosayn Khan. Without pay nor official appointment, he continued to send reports to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs after Sartiges' departure (August 1849). Although officially dismissed, together with General Semino, by Amir Kabir (Nowruz, 20 March 1850), Ferrier continued to claim his due. Conjunctly with Semino and Jules Richard, he sent a petition to the President of the French Republic for putting pressure on the Persian government (25 November 1850). The only result was Ferrier's and Semino's final dismissal. They vainly applied for help to the new Russian Minister, Prince Dolgorouki. Finally, the British envoy, Justin Sheil, who believed that Ferrier and Semino were under Russian protection (PRO, FO 97/292 n° 7) provided them, with authorization from his government, with some funds to leave Persia for Turkey (June 1851).

Ferrier continued to report to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Rhodes where he stayed and ruined himself in an agricultural project, before moving to Egypt. With the support of the rear-admiral Verninac de Saint-Maur, delegate for the French settlements in India, he obtained the position of Mayor at Pondicherry (February 1853), where he was later Judge of Peace and



Chief of Police. He remained there till 1876, and was further appointed at Yanaon and Chandernagore. He returned to France in 1878 and settled at Marseille where he died.

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