



GARDANE MISSION

GARDANE MISSION (1807-09), a diplomatic and military project between France and Persia which represented Napoleon's last attempt to realize his Oriental ambitions. From late 1795, Persia became part of French projects against British India (Greaves, p. 375). Napoleon had viewed his Egyptian campaign (1798-99) as a foothold to launch a conquest of India (Amini, p. 27 ff.). He is also said to have combined with the Tsar Paul I a joint attack on India (Gotteri, II, p. 508; Amini, pp. 60 f.). From the renewal of Franco-Ottoman relations (June 1802), he sought information on Persia. Diplomatic overtures towards a Franco-Persian alliance were made through General Brune, French Ambassador at Constantinople, by Jean-François-Xavier Rousseau, French Consul at Baghdad residing at Aleppo, and Louis Alexandre de Corancez, French Commissary of commercial relations at Aleppo (end of 1803; Dehérain, 1929-30, II, pp. 25 ff.). To counter the Russian threat on his Caucasian khanates, Fath-'Alī Shah (q.v.), having vainly applied to the British, turned to France for military assistance, through his envoy at Constantinople Osep Vassilovitz (de Voogd, p. 249; Amini, p. 67). Upon Rousseau's suggestion, Napoleon dispatched to the Persian court (March 1805) the Orientalist Pierre Amédée Jaubert, followed about one month later by another envoy, Alexandre Romieu. These difficult missions benefited from the helpful assistance of Pierre Ruffin, French chargé d'affaires at Constantinople (Dehérain, II, pp. 30 ff.). Delayed at Constantinople, Jaubert was imprisoned for eight months at Bāyazīd. Romieu, accompanied by the young interpreter Georges Outrey, reached Tehran in September 1805. He could only remit Napoleon's letter to Fath-'Alī Shah before he died (12 October 1805). The Shah's intention to send an ambassador to Paris



and Romieu's report were conveyed through Rousseau (Dehérain, II, p. 37; de Voogd, pp. 249 f.; Gotteri, II, pp. 504 ff.; Amini, pp. 71 ff.). Romieu emphasized the negative answer the British had given to Persian requests for military assistance against Russia, as definitely formulated to Nabī Khan at Bombay, in November 1805 (de Voogd, p. 251; Yapp, p. 38 f.).

Having extended his control over Europe (first half 1806), Napoleon decided to send as ambassador to the Ottoman court General Horace Sébastiani (June 1806) to implement his Oriental policy, notably his projected triple alliance between France, Turkey, and Persia, directed against Russia (Amini, pp. 106 f.). Jaubert was finally well received at the Persian court (Tehran, Şoltānīya, June-July 1806) and soon sent back to Constantinople via Tabrīz and Trebizond. Mīrzā Moḥammad-Rezā Qazvīnī was sent as envoy to Napoleon to negotiate a Franco-Persian alliance. Accompanied by Outrey, he joined Jaubert at Warsaw, where they met Talleyrand, the French minister of foreign affairs. Still hoping to come to an agreement with Russia, Napoleon decided to conclude a treaty with Persia and to send his aide de camp, General Gardane (Figure 1), to Persia (12 April 1807). The latter was then to take command of a French squadron sent by sea to Persia. After an exchange of letters between Napoleon and Fath-ʿAlī Shah, Moḥammad-Rezā was received by Napoleon at the castle of Finkenstein, where the Franco-Persian treaty was signed (4 May 1807). Articles 2-4 of this treaty guaranteed Persia's territorial integrity and stipulated that Georgia, being part of Persia, should be evacuated by the Russians. Articles 6 and 7 contained provisions to provide weapons and military instructors for Persian artillery and infantry. Articles 8-13 were aimed at breaking off Anglo-Persian relations and providing means for a French invasion of India with Persian and Afghan cooperation (De Clerq, II, pp. 201-3; Hurewitz, I, pp. 184 f.; Gardane, pp. 71-80; Driault, pp. 170 ff.; Dehérain, II, pp. 41 ff.; Amini, pp. 246-49).

Other envoys were sent to Persia in 1806-7 to prepare the way for Gardane's mission: Joseph-Marie Jouannin, Auguste de Bontemps-Lefort and his interpreter Auguste Andrea de Nerciat (at Tabrīz), Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Jacques Rousseau (Jean-François's son, called Joseph), and Xavier de La Blanche (de Voogd, p. 251).

Claude Mathieu (or Mathieu Claude) de Gardane (wrongly spelled Gardanne, even in official documents; b. Marseilles, 1766, d. 1818), was the great son of Ange de Gardane, Louis XIV's envoy to the court of Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn. Referring to this precedent, he himself applied to be sent in embassy to Persia



(Amini, p. 118). His credentials, signed by Napoleon (20 April 1807), were followed by his instructions (10 May). These left no doubt about Napoleon's intentions. Persia was then to be considered as Russia's natural enemy and as a military passage to India. Detailed maps and reports on routes, fortresses, and ports throughout Persia and the Persian Gulf were to be provided. A force of twenty thousand men from the French army was envisaged as well as the training of 12,000 Persian soldiers by French officers and petty officers. French artillery and rifles would be sold to Persia. Assistance in India from the Mahrattas should be sought. A triple alliance (France, Persia, the Ottomans) should be negotiated (Napoleon I, *Correspondance* XV, pp. 210-14; Hurewitz, I, pp. 186-88; Gardane, pp. 81-99; Savory, p. 33; de Voogd, p. 252; Amini, pp. 119-20). Gardane left Finkenstein (30 April) and set out for Constantinople (8 June), where he was to meet Rousseau, Jouannin, and de Nerciat.

After his indecisive victory at Eylau over the Russians (7-8 February 1807), Napoleon had urged Sébastiani to send his first secretary, La Blanche, to Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah to try to convince him to attack the Russians in Georgia and declare war on England. While La Blanche was vainly negotiating, Napoleon severely defeated the Russians at Friedland (14 June). An armistice (23 June) was followed by the Treaty of Tilsit (7 July), where Persia's fate was totally ignored (Driault, pp. 197 ff.). Despite this "coup de Tilsit," Gardane's mission was maintained. Talleyrand soon informed Gardane about Tilsit and the shift in Napoleon's policy. Under Talleyrand's successor, de Champagny (from 10 August), Gardane's instructions were consequently modified. The Russo-Persian conflict should be settled through French mediation. Persia was to cooperate with France against Britain (de Voogd, p. 252; Amini, pp. 130 ff.). Napoleon's whim to invade India through Persia was still there (instructions to de Caulaincourt, new ambassador to Russia: see Amini, pp. 135 f.). Still ignoring Tilsit, the Shah decided to send ʿAskar Khan Afšār in embassy to Paris (August 1807). After much delay, the latter departed, was welcomed by Jaubert and Outrey, and reached Paris on 20 July 1808 (Amini, pp. 136, 167).

ʿAbbās Mīrzā and his vizier Mīrzā Bozorg had been informed about Tilsit by the Russian general Gudovich in October 1807. This information influenced Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Shah's attitude towards La Blanche (de Voogd, p. 252; Amini, pp. 136 ff.). Gardane and most of his companions left Scutari (10 September) for Tabrīz, via Erzerum. They were warmly received at Tabrīz by Mīrzā Bozorg and ʿAbbās Mīrzā (13 November) and reached Tehran (4 December) after "an extremely painful and dangerous voyage" (Amini, pp. 139 ff.). Some members



of the mission reached Persia at different times through various itineraries they had to survey (Bontems and Nerciat were already at Tabrīz; Jouannin, Dupré and Joseph Rousseau were at Tehran). Their total number has been exaggerated by some primary and secondary sources (seventy persons according to Fasā'ī and Hedāyat; see also Farnoud, p. 155). The whole mission, i.e., the French legation in Persia, has been estimated at 29 persons at the beginning: General Gardane, 15 “civilians” (3 secretaries, 6 interpreters, 1 physician, 3 missionaries, 1 architect, 1 attaché); 13 military men (4 engineer captains, 1 infantry captain, 1 cavalry captain, 2 artillery lieutenants, 2 engineer-geographer lieutenants; one, Bernard, acting as Gardane’s aide de camp, died at Koy, November 1807); 3 sergeants-major (see de Voogd, p. 253, n. 28). Civilians included: Paul-Ange-Louis de Gardane, the General’s brother, first secretary; Joseph Rousseau, second secretary; Félix Lajard, third secretary; Joseph-Marie Jouannin, first dragoman; Auguste Andrea de Nerciat (second dragoman to Bontems, at Tabrīz); Joinnard, Tancoigne, and Escalon (son), dragomans; Dupré (son), dragoman to engineer-geographer Trézel; Salvatori, physician; Damade, Frangopoulo, Marcopoli, missionaries; Michel François Préaulx, architect. Military men included: Auguste Bontems-Lefort, Bianchi d’Adda, Armand-François Lamy (Lami), and Hilarion Truilhier, engineer captains; Charles-Nicolas Fabvier, and Reboul (Reboulh), artillery lieutenant; Verdier, infantry captain; Finot, Marchal, Damron, infantry sergeants; Camille-Alphonse Trézel, sent on a mission to Baghdad, and Bernard, died at Koy, engineer-geographers (Gardane, pp. 103-5; Driault, p p. 311 f.; Dehérain, II, pp . 46 f.; de Voogd, p. 253; Amini, pp. 127 f., adds de Boisson, Martin, Raymond as attachés to the legation; on them see also Farnoud, p. 155, n. 23; Charles Pépin/Pépiér, a cavalry captain, voluntarily followed the mission but was refused by Gardane).

The mission was warmly received by the vizier Mīrzā Moḥammad-Šafī' and Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah (7 December). The Shah ratified the Treaty of Finkenstein (20 December). He also approved the conclusion of a commercial treaty on the basis of those of 1708 and 1715 (he signed the *farmān*, 26 January 1808). A clause of this treaty provided for the cession by Persia to France of the island of Kārg, after the fulfillment of articles 3 and 4 of the treaty of Finkenstein (Georgia’s return to Persia). Pending this, the Shah would postpone anti-British measures (article 8). Gardane, however, “prepared all means for the expedition to the Indies” (Gardane, pp. 106 ff.; Amini, pp. 146-50). Gardane signed with Mīrzā Šafī' a military convention for the selling of 30,000 rifles (de Voogd, p. 254; Amini, p. 149).



Despite difficulties and hardships, the mission benefited at first from a de facto interruption of Russo-Persian hostilities, from the beginning of 1807. Officers were sent to survey itineraries giving access to India. At Tabrīz, Verdier pursued Bontems' training of Persian levies. In 14 months, he equipped and trained in the European manner three battalions (4,000 or 6,000 men). Lamy directed the construction of barracks, the arsenal, the powder mill, the cannon foundry, and fortified Ardabīl and 'Abbāsābād. He instructed young men selected by 'Abbās Mirzā, who was also his student. He diffused valuable notions on European sciences. At Isfahan, Fabvier and Reboul also trained infantry men. Despite the governor's hostility, Fabvier managed to cast twenty guns; transported with much difficulty to Tehran, they remained unused (de Voogd, pp. 265 f.; Farnoud, pp. 227 ff.; Amini, pp. 195 f.).

Gardane assured the shah that Napoleon would convince Tsar Alexander to cede to Persia all the disputed territories. Negotiations between Gudovich and Persian officials came, however, to no result. Alexander knew that Napoleon was entangled with revolts in Spain (from May 1808). He notified to Caulaincourt his refusal of French mediation on Russo-Persian affairs comparing it to an hypothetical mediation between France and Spain through the Russian Ambassador at Madrid. He was therefore as intransigent as the shah, mostly on Georgia (Atkin, pp. 130 f.; Amini, p. 176).

While Gudovich's envoy, the Baron de Wrede, presented Russia's proposals at Tehran (May 1808), John Malcolm, commissioned by the East India Company, landed at Bushire. The shah, still faithful to the Treaty of Finkenstein, refused to allow him to proceed to Tehran; he was to communicate only with the governor of Fārs. Malcolm attributed this attitude to Gardane's and de Wrede's influence. He reembarked and sailed directly to Calcutta. Still hoping for an illusory mediation, Gardane dispatched Félix Lajard to Gudovich. He informed Caulaincourt, but not Champagny, about this initiative. Pressed upon by the Tsar and mistaken about the whole political situation (including Malcolm's threats to invade Fārs), Gudovich decided to invade Erivan at an untimely season (October 1808). He withdrew with heavy losses under severe winter conditions and had to resign. He blamed French intervention for his defeat. Verdier and Lamy had been, however, refused permission to lead their men against the Russians, according to Tilsit provisions. This and other motives, notably the doubtful success of Lajard's negotiations with Gudovich (he followed him at Tbilisi), particularly incensed the shah against Gardane. He summoned him to his presence (23 November 1808) and left him only sixty



days delay (till 20 January 1809), in the expectation of knowing Napoleon's intentions about Persia. Gardane had been left without instructions from July 1808. The shah, complaining that he had to face the Russians alone, was then considering whether he should receive another British mission led by Sir Harford Jones (later called Brydges, q.v.), who had spent nearly twenty years in Baṣra and Baghdad, where he carefully watched Persian affairs. Unlike Malcolm, who was commissioned by Lord Minto from Bombay, he was the king's envoy to Persia. Gardane notified the shah that he would regretfully depart if Jones were admitted. Despite Malcolm's intrigues and Gardane's obstruction, Jones managed to land at Bushire (December 1808) and to proceed to Tehran. Despairing French assistance, the shah decided to receive him and gave Gardane his leave (12 February 1809). Gardane left Tehran (13 February), the day before Jones entered it. Gardane withdrew to Tabrīz, leaving behind Jouannin and Nerciat. He left Tabrīz (17 April), halted at Kōy (23 April), and departed for France. Jouannin and Nerciat maintained themselves at Tehran till 27 April; they were warmly received at Tabrīz by 'Abbās Mīrzā and Mīrzā Bozorg and left Persia on 13 September (Dehérain, II, pp. 60 ff). Napoleon, rather harshly, blamed Gardane for his withdrawal without orders. He also decided to dispatch Félix Lajard to Tehran as chargé d'affaires, Jouannin being also a member of the mission. Another attempt to renew Franco-Persian contacts was to send back 'Askar Khan from Paris, accompanied by Outrey. Through British influence and intrigues, both initiatives failed (Savory, pp. 34-40; Yapp, pp. 40 ff.; Atkin, pp. 105 f., 131 ff.; de Voogd, p. 254; Farnoud, pp. 156 ff., Greaves, pp. 382 ff.; Amini, pp. 155 ff.). In the absence of representatives, Franco-Persian relations were at a standstill. A last attempt to renew them under Napoleon, in 1812, was of no avail (Amini, pp. 227 f.).

Gardane's mission, which was undercut by the Franco-Russian agreement at Tilsit, was also hampered by many other factors. Communications with France were uneasy. Gardane learnt only in February 1808 that Champagny had replaced Talleyrand in August 1807. An exchange of correspondence took about seven months. Gudovich's attitude foiled Russo-Persian negotiations. While Gardane was facing British intrigues (November 1808), Champagny repelled his further proposal for a French mediation, as well as the execution of the treaty of commerce. He would submit the clauses for a military convention to the Ministry of War. He refused to allow additional credits for the mission, increasingly supported financially by Persia. After the events in Spain, Persia had become of minimal importance for Napoleon. In his meeting



with the Tsar at Erfurt (October 1808), he practically left to the Russians a free hand on Oriental affairs (on Gardane's failure and withdrawal, see Driault, pp. 328 ff., Dehérain, II., pp. 51 ff., Amini, pp. 199 ff.). High ranking Persian officials in Tabrīz, Tehran, and Isfahan were opposed to Gardane; however, he had the vizier Mīrzā Šafī' and Moḥammad-Nabī Khan on his side (de Voogd, pp. 254 ff.).

Another point, requiring further research, concerns Gardane's ability to fulfill his mission. From the beginning, he suffered from the climate which aggravated a war injury in his left leg (10 April 1800). He soon applied to be relieved from his mission, and his wife, in France, also intervened for his return (Farnoud, p. 157; Amini, p. 166). His brother left Tehran on 27 January 1808. Regarding his qualifications as a negotiator, he was apparently more of a soldier than a diplomat (Drouville, II, pp. 105-7; Amini, p. 159). Gardane's companions were apparently badly considered by the Persians towards the end of the mission (Farnoud, pp. 155 f.). Despite Gardane's failure, Napoleon maintained his dotation in Westphalia, granted in March 1808, and promoted him to "Comte d'Empire" in August 1809. However, after his misconduct during the retreat in Portugal (1811), he fell in complete disgrace. He supported Louis XVIII and commanded a brigade sent against Napoleon after his escape from the Island of Elba (March 1815) but defected with his troops to join Napoleon's forces. He had to retire definitely after the second Restoration (4 September 1815).

Despite its limited results on both diplomatic and military fields, the Gardane mission opened the way for a long lasting French influence in Persia. French soldiers were attracted to the Persian service, beginning with Jean Raymond, the artillery officer, who joined 'Abbās Mīrzā at Tabrīz in 1808, after having served in the East India Company and as an instructor for the troops of the pasha at Baghdad. He became a member of Gardane's mission and the last one remaining in Persia (Dehérain, II, pp. 68 f.). He was followed by Gaspard Drouville, a cavalry officer, in 1812 (Farnoud, pp. 232 f.). Persian elite, taught and trained by French officers, discovered European science and culture through the French. Valuable observations on Persia were left in their writings by Gardane's companions (Dupré, Lamy, Raymond, Tancoigne, Trézel, and Truilhier). Their correspondence with Ruffin constitutes valuable historical documentation. Some of them, and particularly Lamy, Trézel, and Fabvier, pursued brilliant careers (Dehérain, II, pp. 47 ff.). Despite misunderstandings, failures or limited success of military cooperation (French missions sent in



1839-40, 1858), French influence remained strong.

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