



GERMANY V. GERMAN TRAVELERS AND EXPLORERS IN PERSIA

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Hans Schiltberger, a Bavarian soldier, was the first German to give an eyewitness account of his travels in Persia. Initially captured by the Ottomans in 1396, he later became a prisoner of Tīmūr at the battle of Ankara (1402). In Timurid service, he traveled extensively within the whole empire before he eventually managed to return home in 1427. In his account, Schiltberger made use of the works of famous travelers who had been to Persia before him (e.g., Marco Polo, Ruy González de Clavijo), but he must have seen at least the northern part of Persia, especially Azarbaijan, in person. He also mentioned Isfahan, Yazd, Shiraz, and the Persian Gulf coast, although it remains unclear whether he actually traveled there. Schiltberger's lack of any academic background, however, makes his descriptions of little scientific value (ed. Grässel, pp. 2-5).

Georg Tectander von der Jabel, the only survivor of a legation sent to Persia by Emperor Rudolf II in 1602, traveled through Gīlān and Azarbaijan, where he spent a while in Tabrīz before he eventually accompanied Shah 'Abbās I on his



campaign into Transcaucasia. Having successfully accomplished the mission's diplomatic tasks in Persia, Tectander safely guided a Persian envoy to the emperor (Hinz, p. 408).

The Silesian Heinrich von Poser was the first genuine German explorer. Driven only by his own curiosity, he traveled to Persia in 1621. He reached Isfahan—where he met the famous Italian traveler Pietro Della Valle (q.v.)—via Jolfā, Tabrīz, Solṭāniya, Golpaygān and K̄vānsār, and from there he traveled eastwards exploring unusual routes. His ultimate destination was India, but instead of taking the short sea route via Bandar 'Abbās, he took the route to Yazd and then crossed the Lūt desert via Ṭabas and Bīrjand to reach Afghanistan. On his way home three years later, von Poser took the usual route via Bandar 'Abbās and Isfahan. His valuable travel account was eventually published by his son in 1675 (Gabriel, pp. 57-59).

Adam Olearius/Ölschläger's journey to Persia (1635/39) as secretary of the Holstein mission, which spent more than a year at the Safavid court, resulted in an excellent travel account. Olearius also improved the then existing, but quite erroneous, maps of Persia. The mission had been initiated by the Hamburg merchant Otto Brüggemann, who, having successfully overcome fierce Swedish competition, had developed excellent commercial connections in Russia and was then planning to establish a trade route between Persia and Holstein via the Caspian Sea (q.v.), the River Volga, and the Baltic Sea. The cultivated and versatile diplomatic envoy of Duke Friedrich III of Holstein-Gottorp, Philipp Crusius, was indeed very successful in securing the legation Shah Ṣafī's benevolence. Shah Ṣafī also apparently felt a special affection for another member of the legation, Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo, whom he invited to stay at his court, offering him a very tempting salary. Nevertheless the arrogant, tactless behavior of Brüggemann did not help much to meet the mission's unrealistic ambitions. The mission headed back home at the end of 1637, but the young von Mandelslo, accompanied by three of his compatriots, traveled via Pasargadae, Persepolis, Shiraz, and Lār to reach Bandar 'Abbās, from where he embarked on a long journey to India and further beyond. Mandelslo eventually returned to Holstein in 1640 but as he (being still very young) was killed on the battlefield, it was Adam Olearius who published his travel account. In 1647 Jürgen Andersen, another subject of duke Friedrich III of Holstein-Gottorp, entered the service of Shah 'Abbās II as an artillery officer. He took part in the campaign of 'Abbās II against Mughal India. At the end of 1650 he was back in Holstein, where he wrote an account on his travels, which



again was to be published by Olearius (Gabriel, pp. 88-93; Olearius, ed. Haberland, pp. 18-21; Kochwasser, pp. 37-41).

Of all early German travelers in Persia, Engelbert von Kaempfer was probably the most acute observer. He came to Isfahan in 1684 as a physician in the service of a Swedish mission. He stayed in the capital for twenty months dedicating his time to all sorts of scholarly activities, including cartography, botanical studies, and medical observations. He left Isfahan for Bandar 'Abbās at the end of 1685, and on his way he paused at Persepolis for three days, which were enough for him to take a highly accurate picture of the site. Unable to embark on a Dutch ship immediately as he had hoped, Kaempfer stayed in Bandar 'Abbās for more than two years, serving as a doctor for the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie). He again used this time for meticulous observations and for conducting his research on the Persian date palm tree. In 1688 he eventually could start his eastbound journey that would take him as far as Japan and make him famous as the explorer of that country (Kaempfer, ed. Hinz, pp. 6-18).

A few other Germans who came to Persia in Safavid times and have left us accounts of their adventures deserve to be mentioned. Daniel Parthey, a German soldier in the service of the Dutch East India Company fought against Arab pirates around Bandar 'Abbās in 1660. Another German employee of the Dutch, Johann Gottlieb Worm, accompanied an envoy of the Dutch East India Company sent to the Safavid court in 1717. He traveled to Isfahan from India via Bandar 'Abbās, where he claims to have met a German physician, Wenzel von Altenberg, who allegedly had been living in Persia for eighteen years. In 1700 a travel party including two German Catholic padres, Wilhelm Weber and Wilhelm Mayr, the student Ernst Hanxleden, and the young barber Franz Kaspar Schillinger, who later published an account of this journey, crossed Persia via Tabrīz, Qazvīn, Isfahan, and Bandar 'Abbās on their way to India (Gabriel, pp. 98, 111-12, 118; Kochwasser, pp. 41-42; Parthey, *passim*; Worms, *passim*; Schillinger, *passim*).

During the Zand era, Carsten Niebuhr, the famous explorer of the Yemen, was in Persia for a brief time in 1765. He copied many Achaemenid inscriptions that later provided the groundwork for deciphering the cuneiform system. He then was on his way home, being the only survivor of an expedition of scholars sent to India and Arabia by the Danish king Frederick V. Niebuhr traveled from Būšeher to Shiraz, using an extensive detour southward through Kormūj and Lār (Gabriel, p. 123). He also visited the island of Kārg. Although



he only spent a short time in one corner of Persia, his sharp observations and his skills as a cartographer made his travel account a highly important contribution to the scientific exploration of Persia (Scurla, pp. 243-49).

A few years later (1770 and 1774), Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin, a German geographer in Russian service, traveled extensively in Persia's Caspian provinces, where he was particularly interested in botanical and zoological discoveries (Gabriel, p. 129; Gmelin, *passim*).

In 1817, Moritz von Kotzebue, son of the famous German playwright August von Kotzebue, traveled to Persia in the cortège of a Russian embassy sent to the encampment of Fath-ʿAlī Shah at Solṭānīya. Moritz von Kotzebue, then a young lieutenant in Russian service, kept a very informative journal of this embassy, which was soon afterwards published by his father in Weimar. The embassy left Tbilisi in mid-April 1817 and arrived in Tabrīz on the 18 May, where the czar's envoy was received by ʿAbbās Mīrzā (q.v.), the crown prince. Kotzebue gave a very valuable description of the audience with the crown prince (Kotzebue, tr., pp. 153-74). After eight days, the embassy left Tabrīz for Solṭānīya via Zanjān. The envoys reached their destination on the 26 July 1817 and Fath-ʿAlī Shah eventually received the embassy at the 31 July 1817 (Kotzebue, tr., p. 262). At the end of August 1817, the embassy left the shah's encampment and traveled back to Russia by way of Tabrīz and Erivan (Kotzebue, tr., pp. 319-27).

In the 1840s, western Azarbaijan was visited by the German geographer Moritz Wagner, who took a special interest in the area of Lake Urmia and later published a major scholarly study covering all aspects of that region (Gabriel, p. 150; Wagner, *passim*).

Ernst Otto Blau, attaché at the Prussian Legation in Constantinople, traveled in Azarbaijan in summer 1857. He was especially interested in Persia's economic and commercial situation. In his account of Persia's commercial conditions, he expressed prudent optimism about the economic potential of the region and the prospects for Prussian trade there (Blau, pp. 251-62; Kochwasser, pp. 61-63; Martin, p. 20).

Partly inspired by Blau's optimistic outlook, a royal Prussian mission initially headed by Julius Freiherr von Minutoli traveled extensively in western and central Persia between April 1860 and April 1861. The mission was hardly of any political consequence, but it produced a highly valuable description of



Persia that was later published by the famous Orientalist Heinrich Brugsch, who had taken over the leadership of the mission after von Minutoli's death near Shiraz in 1860. In 1885, the experienced Middle East expert Brugsch returned to Persia as interpreter for the first permanent German legation in Tehran (Scuria, pp. 322-25).

The German scholars Franz Stolze, a geographer, and Friedrich Carl Andreas (q.v.), a philologist who had worked on the Avesta, traveled extensively in Persia. Stolze, who had originally come to Isfahan in 1874 as a member of a scientific expedition to observe a transit of the planet Venus, had already visited Persepolis, Fasā, Dārāb, and Firūzābād when Andreas joined him in 1876. They together explored archeological sites in Fārs and conducted some small-scale excavations. Andreas left in 1880, while Stolze decided to remain in Persia for another year. Their sharp observations of the country's commercial and infra-structural conditions resulted in a painstaking account of Persia's economical geography at the end of the 19th century (Stolze and Andreas, passim; Kochwasser, 1885, pp. 88-89). Andreas also researched a number of dialects and collected a considerable amount of linguistic data.

Other German explorers who made worthy contributions to the geography of Persia include Franz Theodor Strauss, who lived in Solṭānābād (present-day Arāk) for many years, exploring western Persia in the years 1889-1910 (Frotscher, passim); the zoologist Erich Zugmayer, who explored lake Urmia in 1904; Hugo Grothe, who traveled across northern and western Persia in 1907; and Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer, who explored southern Khorasan in 1912 (Gabriel, p. 258, pp. 255-59; Grothe, passim; Niedermayer, 1920, passim; Zugmayer, passim).

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