



GRIBOEDOV, ALEXANDER SERGEEVICH

GRIBOEDOV, ALEXANDER SERGEEVICH (b. Moscow, 15 January 1794; killed in Tehran, 11 February 1829; [Figure 1](#)), Russian writer, poet, and playwright, whose most famous work is the play *Gore ot uma* (*Woe from wit*). After graduating from Moscow University with a degree in literature and law, Griboedov first joined the military and then the diplomatic service. Griboedov joined the Russian administration in Transcaucasia in early 1819 and was sent by the Chief Administrator, General Ermolov, to Persia to establish the Russian Mission in Tehran. He remained in Persia until the end of 1821. On his return he was stationed in Georgia, where he expressed great interest in Georgian culture and some interest in Armenian history. Between 1823 and 1825 Griboedov lived in St. Petersburg, where he made the acquaintance of reformists (later Decembrists), but did not join their ranks. He left St. Petersburg in May 1825 and reached the Caucasus at the end of that year. Following the Decembrist revolt he was arrested in Grozny (Chechnia) and sent to St. Petersburg, where he was personally questioned by Tsar Nicholas I in June 1826. Following the outbreak of the Second Russo-Persian War Griboedov was sent back to Georgia. He took part in the siege of Erevan by General Ivan Paskevich. In August 1827 he was dispatched to present the Russian terms to 'Abbās Mirzā (q.v.). Griboedov's knowledge of Persia was instrumental in his active role during negotiations of the Treaty of Torkamānčāy in February 1828. A few months later Griboedov took the treaty to St. Petersburg for ratification. Following its ratification, Griboedov was



appointed ambassador plenipotentiary (*wazir-e moḳtār*) to Persia in April 1828. On the way to Tehran, Griboedov stopped in Tbilisi and married Nina Chavchavadze. He arrived in Persia in October. His behavior, according to Persian sources, was abominable. He and his staff insulted Muslims in the *bāzār* and took a number of Christian women, who had converted to Islam, to the Mission. Their actions caused a riot in Tehran during which a mob attacked the Mission and killed Griboedov and some members of his staff (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 705-9). Griboedov's body was transported to Tbilisi, where it was buried near the church in the St. David Monastery on Mtsaminda Hill. Russian sources claim that British agents, who feared Russian influence in Tehran, and Persian reactionaries, who were not satisfied with the Torkamāncāy treaty, were responsible for inciting the mob (Balaian, Enikolopov). The death of Griboedov, who was a liberal and who advocated regional autonomy for the Christians in Transcaucasia, was probably not a great loss for Tsar Nicholas or General Paskevich, both of whom wished to Russianize the minorities in the Caucasus. The Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29 might have been another reason for the Russian inaction. In any case, Faṭḥ-ʿAli Shah (q.v.) and ʿAbbās Mirzā, fearing that the Russians may use Griboedov's death as a pretext for a new war, sent an embassy, headed by prince Ḳosrow Mirzā, a son of ʿAbbās Mirzā, to Russia to apologize, to present valuable gifts, to explain the inappropriate behavior of Griboedov, and to assure that the Persian government had nothing to do with the sad affair (Hedāyat, *Rawzat al-ṣafā* IX, pp. 710-13).

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