



GURDZIECKI, BOGDAN

GURDZIECKI, BOGDAN (known in Persia as Bohtam Beg), Polish envoy of Georgian-Armenian origin and first permanent Polish resident in Safavid Persia (d. Moscow, 12 April 1700).

Little more is known about Bogdan Gurdziecki's early life other than that he was a native of Georgia of Armenian background who until the mid-17th century lived in Georgia and, beginning of the 1650s, served the Polish crown. In 1667, immediately following the Russo-Polish Peace Treaty of Andrusovo, Russia appealed to Poland to cooperate in an anti-Ottoman effort, which was to include a common diplomatic and economic initiative toward Safavid Persia. Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich advised Jan Kazimir, Poland's ruler, to send a special mission to Isfahan in order to conclude an agreement with the shah. Kazimir reacted positively, and in early 1668 Gurdziecki left the Polish capital with a suite of thirty-four persons, which included his brother Parsadan. His official mission was to congratulate the shah on his accession, to inform the Persians of the recently concluded Russo-Polish peace treaty, and to expand missionary privileges in Persia. Informally, he was also to persuade Shah Solaymān to join the anti-Ottoman league and to ratify the commercial treaty between Russia and the Armenians that had been concluded a year earlier, provided that part of Persia's exports would be directed to Poland.

Traveling via Moscow, where the tsar received him, Gurdziecki reached Astrakhan in February 1669 and, after a stop in his native Georgia, where he handed letters from the tzar to the local rulers, he arrived in Isfahan at the end of the same year. In February and again on 21 March 1670, during the



Nowruz festivities, he was received in audience by Shah Solaymān. Gurdziecki is said to have told the shah that the Ottomans were about to resume war against Persia. He seems to have spoken for Persia's Armenian merchants when he requested that trade between Persia and Poland be conducted by Armenian not "Persian" merchants. In response, the shah issued a *farmān* (q.v.) ordering the Armenians to stay away from the Ottoman route and to take their silk via the Volga route to Russia and Poland. Gurdziecki apparently failed in his attempt to persuade the shah to join in an anti-Ottoman alliance, and was rebuffed in his request for greater privileges for missionaries, though the shah did allow the construction of a church and a monastery in Erevan (Zevakin, pp. 144-45; Józefowicz, pp. 333-34; Baiburtian, p. 103; Kevorkian, p. 16).

In June 1670, Gurdziecki received permission to leave. A Persian ambassador named Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Beg set out with him on the return journey to Russia (Zedginidze, pp. 12-15). Reaching Šamāki in August, they found the road to Russia blocked by the rebellion of Cossack leader Sten'ka Razin. Gurdziecki thus remained in Persia for the next three years. A more compelling reason why he decided to stay was probably the fact that in Šamāki he became involved in a dispute with fellow Poles; he was seriously injured and almost killed, and in turn he killed the person who is called his "competitor," Paniegros (Struys, pp. 255-58; Coolhaas, pp. 179-80).

The details of Gurdziecki's next visit to Persia remain unclear. According to G. E. Zedginidze (p. 11), Gurdziecki returned to Poland in 1675 and in April 1676 was appointed Polish envoy and permanent resident at the Safavid court. Zofia Józefowicz (p. 334) claims that the Polish King Jan III sent him to Persia shortly after the conclusion of the Treaty of Zorawinski (17 October 1676). Neither statement is easy to reconcile with the observation of the Dutch agent in Isfahan in 1677 to the effect that a Polish envoy had come to Isfahan to find out what Gurdziecki had achieved seven years earlier and if he had converted to Islam (Coolhaas, pp. 179-80). However that may be, Gurdziecki does seem to have gone back to Persia, for he returned to Poland in 1678. In 1681 he showed up on the Persian soil again. This time his mandate was unclear beyond greeting the shah, but it probably included new overtures toward military cooperation against the Ottomans. The Dutch claim that he was supposed to stay in Persia as permanent resident of Poland. The shah appointed him the mayor (*kalāntar*) of Nak-javān, provided he would convert to Islam, as he presumably had promised during his earlier visit. Upon his refusal to do so, he



was allowed to take up residence in Šamāki, leaving the capital in December 1681 (ARA, VOC 1364, fol. 357; VOC 1379, fols. 2662v-64). As E. Zevakin (p. 145) indicates, he must have returned again to Poland, however, for in 1684 he traveled once more from Poland to Persia (Chowaniec, p. 154). He is most likely the Polish envoy mentioned by Engelbert Kaempfer as attending the New Year's festivities that year (Kaempfer, p. 260). Józefowicz (pp. 334-35), who seems to conflate this visit with an earlier one, claims that he was the first to inform the shah about the news of the Ottoman defeat at Vienna in 1683.

In 1687, Gurdziecki again visited Persia with a letter from the Polish king, which he presented to the shah in June. This mission did not have any results (Richard, I, p. 121). We lack information on his subsequent activities, except that he is said to have returned to Poland in 1699 with a special assignment from Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn. Gurdziecki died in 1700 (Zedgnidze, p. 20).

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