



HANWAY, JONAS

HANWAY, JONAS (1712-86), an English merchant who traveled to Persia and wrote an account of the trip which provides an eyewitness view of northern Iran during Nāder Shah's last years. The son of a naval provisioner, Hanway spent several years in Portugal before moving in 1743 to St. Petersburg to work for the British Russia Company. He was soon sent to Iran to assess the condition of the Company's trade there and to investigate its agent, John Elton. Elton, an English sailor, had been working to establish a British mercantile presence on the Caspian since 1740, when he had secured trading privileges from Nāder Shah. As "Jamāl Beg," Elton was also building a Caspian fleet for Nāder. The Russians took a dim view of Elton's serving both as an Iranian naval commander and a British merchant. In 1743 they denounced him as a smuggler and a spy, so Hanway was dispatched to appraise the situation firsthand (Hanway, I, pp. 105-6).

Hanway reached Elton in Langarūd. His initial impression of Elton and the state of British trade in Iran was favorable. This emboldened Hanway to organize a test caravan of goods to Mašhad, a principal entrepôt of the overland route to India from the Caspian region. His trip ended abruptly in Astarābād, where he was detained and most of his cargo looted by the forces of Moḥammad Ḥasan Khan Qājār, who was then rebelling against Nāder. Barely escaping back to Langarūd, Hanway was persuaded by Elton to seek restitution from the shah. At the royal camp near Hamadan, the shah's deputies promised Hanway compensation, but ordered him to seek it in Astarā-bād. Hanway grudgingly went back, but received partial remuneration



for his losses only after arduous negotiations (Hanway, I, pp. 215-21). He returned to Russia in September 1744 soured on the future of trade in the region. In 1746 the Russians formally banned British merchants from the Caspian (Hanway I, pp. 331-34). Britain did not challenge this decision, given the lackluster record of its commercial ventures there and a perceived need to make Russia its ally in European conflicts.

Soon after returning to England in 1750, Hanway published *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, a four-volume compendium of his experiences in Russia and Persia (Lockhart, p. 309). The first two volumes contain a narrative of his trip replete with valuable eyewitness descriptions, such as a detailed account of Nāder's camp. The second two volumes are a general history of Iran from 1722 to 1749, based largely on the earlier works of Judasz Tadeusz Krusinski, Louis André de la Mamie de Clairac, and James Bailie Fraser. Displaying an Enlightenment abhorrence of absolute rulers, Hanway saw Nāder as little more than a tyrannical usurper driven by lust for power and wealth, but he admired the "robust, warlike, and hardy" nature of the Persians he had met (Hanway, I, p. 226).

In later years Hanway achieved fame as a founding member of the Marine Society, one of the first mod-ern English charity associations. He produced numerous books and tracts, but never wrote again about Persia.

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