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RUSSIA IV. TRAVELERS IN PERSIA TO 1917

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Russian travelers' reports are a valuable source on the history of Persia and its relationship with Russia. The earliest known Russian account dealing with Persia is that by Afanasiĭ Nikitin from Tver'. Nikitin was one of the merchants who accompanied an embassy traveling to Šervān in 1466, and he visited Māzandarān, Ray, Kāšān, and Yazd. Since Nikitin's main interest was the possibilities of trade with India, he continued on to there from Persia. He passed through Persia again on his way back to Russia (Bartol'd, pp. 173-74). Nikitin's travels lasted six years (1466-72) and were described in his diary, which, however, deals mostly with India. In 1623, another merchant, Fedot Kotov, from Moscow, was sent to Persia with goods from the state treasury. He was probably also commissioned to report on the routes, population, and cities along his way (Kuznetsova, p. 13). Kotov's description of this journey is based on his diary and emphasizes trade and economic matters, though it also contains information concerning ethnography, religion, customs, and architecture.

The next group of Russian travel accounts about Persia belongs to the time of Peter the Great (r. 1689-1725). It was then that the equal, largely trade-oriented

relations between the two countries began to give way before Russia's intentions to expand into Persian territory while Persia was torn by inner conflicts and foreign invasions. In 1715-18 Peter the Great sent to Persia a young officer, Artemiĭ Volynskiĭ, later a famous political figure, in order to gather strategic information, to promote Russian trade, and to explore the possibilities of a military alliance against the Ottomans. Volynskiĭ's journal is an important document, which contains a detailed description of his mission's activities, as well as an analysis of political and social life in Persia at the beginning of the 18th century (ed. Bushev). It also provides vivid descriptions of everyday life, the people, and their customs. Noteworthy is that, on the basis of his analysis, Volynskiĭ predicted the imminent downfall of the Safavid dynasty. Artemiĭ Volynskiĭ's journal is complemented by the account by John Bell, a Scottish doctor in the service of Peter the Great, who accompanied Volynskiĭ to Persia. Several chapters of Bell's extensive travel account on different countries are devoted to Persia.

Next in point of time come the reports and letters by Florio Beneveni, an Italian in the Russian diplomatic service. Beneveni's embassy was detained in Persia for three years (1719-21) on its way from Russia to Bukhara, and thus he witnessed the upheaval and disintegration of the Safavid empire shortly before its final collapse in 1722. Ivan Gerber and Fedor Soĭmonov, both participants in the Persian campaign of Peter the Great in 1722, also wrote about Persia. Gerber was mainly interested in the situation in the Caucasus, including the relationship of the different Caucasian peoples with Persian rulers, while Soĭmonov concentrated on the cartography and hydrography of the Caspian Sea.

During the interregnum of the Afghan occupation (1722-30) and the strife-torn reign of Nāder Shah Afšār (1736-47) and his immediate successors, no Russian traveler left a record of having ventured into Persia. In 1771-74, Samuel Gotlib Gmelin, a naturalist and Member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, led two scientific expeditions to Gilān and adjacent areas of northern Persia (nominally ruled by Karim Khan Zand, but in practice controlled by the Qajar tribe of Astarabad), and published a detailed description of its population, everyday life, politics, economy, flora and fauna. In 1781-82, a naval expedition led by Count Marko Ivanovich Voĭnovich was sent to the eastern Caspian in order to create a fortified base on the trade route to Bukhara and India. The members of this expedition were arrested and expelled by Āḡā Moḥammad Khan, the future founder of the Qajar dynasty (r. 1789-1797; q.v).

They were also forced to demolish the fort they had built on the Bay of Astarabad. This unsuccessful expedition was described by two of its members, the naturalist Karl Ludwig Gablits and army lieutenant Radling.

Almost at the same time, an unofficial (in fact, involuntary) Russian traveler visited Persia. Filip Efremov, a sergeant who served in Orenburg, was taken captive by the Kirghiz in 1774 and brought to Bukhara. It took him nine years to return to Russia, after traveling through Asian lands, including Persia, and finally Britain (Bartol'd, p. 224). His unsophisticated travelogue includes concise though fragmentary accounts about Persia's natural conditions, agriculture, population, cities, houses, and weaponry.

Toward the end of the 18th century, the Armenian brothers Atanasov (in 1790) and a member of the Georgian gentry, Raphail Danibegov (in 1795-1813), journeyed through Persia to India and from there through western Tibet and eastern Turkestan to Siberia. Though these travelers were not ethnic Russians and started in the Caucasus, which at that time was not yet part of Russia, they went back home through eastern and southern Russia, and their accounts were published in Russia (Bartol'd, p. 227).

There was an explosion of European travel writings about the Middle East in the 19th century, among which Russian accounts of Persia make up a significant number. During the 19th and early 20th centuries (before 1917), more than 125 Russian travelers published over 200 accounts of Persia in the form of books and articles. By the beginning of the 19th century, after a century of Westernization, Russia developed a colonialist outlook on expansion into alien lands: it was believed that colonies could make the Empire rich, and that the Empire could in turn lead the colonized peoples to civilization and Christianity. Russia wrested Caucasian territories from Persia as a result of two wars in the first half of the 19th century (1803-13 and 1826-28), and was advancing into Central Asia in the second half of the 19th century. It was also considering further expansion in northern and northeastern Persia. Throughout the 19th century, Russia and Britain were rivals for domination over Asian politics (the "Great Game"), with Persia being one of the areas of this competition. In 1907, the Anglo-Russian Convention divided Persia into British and Russian spheres of interest: northern and central Persia with the cities of Tehran and Isfahan fell into the Russian sphere; the southeast went to the British sphere, and the area between them was made a neutral zone. The majority of Russian travelers in the 19th and early 20th centuries went through the Caucasus and Transcaucasia on

their way to Persia, and spent most of their time in the northern and northeastern parts of the country. Judging from the Russian travelogues, the 1907 agreement only confirmed the actual existence of a Russian sphere of interest in Persia, which had been formed by the late 19th century.

Most travelogues were written in the second half of the 19th century, when the war of pacification in the Caucasus was over, and the Central Asian territories were brought under Russian control. The accounts vary significantly in length and style, depending on the purpose of the journey and on the intended readership. Some articles are only several pages long, while some of the books contain several hundred pages. Articles were published in scholarly, military, and governmental periodicals and monographs, treatises from learned societies, and literary magazines. The travelogues fall into three major groups: those written purely for entertainment, those for official use, and those combining both approaches. The accounts belonging to the first group are very few in number. The second group is more extensive: the authors usually went to Persia on some government assignment or participated in scientific expeditions, and they published purely official reports upon their return. The majority of the accounts fall into the third category: the authors describe their mission in greater or lesser detail and, at the same time, cover numerous topics related to all aspects of Persian life, often with a strong personal element.

The authors of the travelogues fall into the following categories: military officers, diplomats (including those who were in the military service at the same time), civil servants (including engineers, doctors, traders), scholars (professional orientalists and natural scientists). There is a striking preponderance of military officers among the authors: those who were not on a military mission were engaged in diplomatic or commercial activities or road and railroad construction projects. This preponderance of travelogues by military officers is another indication of Russian colonial designs vis-à-vis the Caucasus, Central Asia, and beyond. Many of these officers had served in the Caucasus or in Central Asia before and had colonial experience by the time they arrived in Persia. Some of them were on secret missions and reported to their headquarters; thus their published travel accounts do not present the whole picture. Meanwhile, some accounts by military officers were published in editions marked “confidential.” Both military and civilian travelers belonged mainly to the aristocracy, and had either university or higher military education. Among the prominent men who traveled to Persia were

General Alekseĭ Ermolov, a well-known Russian military and political figure of the first half of the 19th century, hero of the war against Napoleon and conqueror of the Caucasus; Aleksandr S. Griboedov, a famous writer and a tragic figure in the history of Russian diplomacy; the commanders of the Persian Cossack Brigade, Domontovich and V. A. Kosogovskiĭ; the eminent professional orientalists Il'ya Berezin, Vladimir Minorskiĭ, and Nikolaĭ Khanykov. There appear to be two small articles written by women, one named Zhukovskaya, another anonymous. A few other travelers published their works under pseudonyms or anonymously.

The range of themes treated in the travelogues is amazingly broad, though some travelogues are more comprehensive, while others deal with one or more specific topics. The most popular subjects are the following: the condition of the roads in northern and northeastern Persia and their accessibility in case of an advance by Russian troops; the Persian army, its numbers, arms, and shortcomings; the Persian government and administration and the corruption of the rulers; the tribes in Persia, especially the Turkmans in the northeast and the Kurds in the northwest and in Kurdish settlements in Khorasan; Russia's rivalry with the British, including Russian versus British trade; Persian family life and morals; structure of Persian houses and bazaars; religious rituals and sects.

Being in government service involved the authors directly and openly in Russia's imperial politics. They perceived their own activities in Persia as part of the civilizing mission of the Empire in the Orient, and at the same time as a part of Russia's struggle against Britain. Most of the authors stress their European identity: their affiliation with the rest of Europe is significant in defining their self-identity vis-à-vis the Persians. Their worldview is decidedly Eurocentric. Therefore their attitude towards the British in Persia is ambivalent: on the one hand, on the personal level, there is a strong feeling of affinity with Western Europeans in the "hostile" atmosphere of Persia; on the other hand, political rivalry is the defining element of this relationship. The travelers' representation of Persia and its people is usually marked by a contemptuous attitude and an air of superiority. Sarcastic comments and notes ridiculing people and their habits and etiquette pepper the pages of the travelogues, along with sweeping generalizations about all Persians, or even all "Orientals." Most of the travelers blame the pitiful condition of Persia on its despotic rules and contrast it with the glorious past; they do not believe that progress is possible in Persia. Russian travelers see Persian people first and

foremost as non-Christians, with their perceived "backwardness" as a symptom and natural consequence of their being Muslim. Emphasizing their own Christian faith, like emphasizing their European-ness, boosts the travelers' self-assurance and gives them a sense of superiority over the strange Orientals. They blame Muslim "fanaticism" for the position of women, which is perceived as pitiable, owing to their seclusion, veiling, and the institutions of polygamy and temporary marriage. Many travelers favor non-Muslim Persians—Babis, Armenians, and Zoroastrians. Sunni Muslims are presented with sympathy, as less fanatical than Shiʿites. This religious preference is combined with an ethnic one: a number of Russians favor non-Persians—Turkmans, Kurds and Arabs.

Most of the Russian travelogues are "anti-Romantic": they reject Romanticism and often deliberately ridicule it and its fascination with Oriental exoticism and sensuality. This attitude contrasts notably with Romantic representations of the Orient that played an important part in the works of Russian writers and poets of the 19th century, such as the Caucasus-inspired romantic fiction by Alexander Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov.

Some of the most representative and significant of the great number of Russian travelers in Persia and their works published in the 19th and early 20th centuries are described below in chronological order (unless stated otherwise, information about the authors is extracted from their travelogues).

Alekseĭ Petrovich Ermolov (1777-1861) came from an old aristocratic family of modest means. First tutored at home, he continued his education at a boarding school affiliated with Moscow University. He underwent further training in the Artillery Corps and read extensively on his own. Ermolov started his military career at the age of fifteen, with the rank of captain. He participated in campaigns in Poland in 1794, Georgia in 1796, and against Napoleon in 1805-07. Ermolov was promoted to colonel in 1806, and to major-general in 1808. He fought against Napoleon from 1812 through 1815 and won fames as a hero of the battle of Borodino (1812). In 1816, General Ermolov was appointed Caucasian Corps Commander and civil administrator of the Caucasus and the province of Astrakhan'. He led military operations against the highlanders, oversaw the building of Russian forts, and put down uprisings. Ermolov's activities as a civil administrator in the Caucasus ranged from constructing roads and encouraging trade to composing a special prayer for Alexander I to be said by Muslims in the Caucasus, which was made obligatory in all the mosques of the region under his administration. In 1817 Ermolov was sent to

Persia as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary on a mission to settle the demarcation line between Russia and Persia in accordance with the Treaty of Golestān (1813). In 1825 his patron Alexander I died, which effectively ended Ermolov's career. He was retired in 1826, and spent the rest of his life partly on his estate, and partly in Moscow (*Èntsiklopedicheskiĭ slovar'*,p. 675).

The travel account by Ermolov is devoted to his visit to Persia during April-September of 1817. His main topics are the meetings with high-ranking Persian officials in Tabriz and Solṭānīya, and the negotiations with ʿAbbās Mirzā and Fatḥ-ʿAli Shah concerning the Caucasian territories seized by Russia as a result of the war of 1813. After studying the territories, Ermolov came to the conclusion that none could be ceded back to Persia without damage to Russia's interests. Some details of Persian court etiquette—such as taking off one's shoes and putting on red socks—received special attention by Ermolov, who refused to observe them in his audiences with the shah and the heir apparent. He witnessed a review of ʿAbbās Mirzā's infantry and artillery, and gave a favorable account of their skill. His general opinion of Persia is strongly negative, expressed in his characteristically straightforward manner.

Dementiĭ Ivanov Tsikulin was a peasant from the province of Ryazan'. According to his own words, in 1808 he was sent to the city of Astrakhan' and from there across the Caspian on a trade assignment to the Persian port of Anzali. On his way back, he decided to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. While traveling to Baghdad, he was waylaid and wounded by robbers and later captured by a khan of Kermanshah, who made him herd his cattle. Tsikulin spent three years and four months there, during which he "endured all kinds of sufferings" because the khan tried to force him to convert to Islam, but in vain. Tsikulin was kidnapped again by Kurds, who sold him to their *sardār*. His new owner also tried to force him to become a Muslim. One year and seven months later he escaped and, after more unpleasant adventures, reached Baghdad. He traveled to several other Middle Eastern countries, such as Arabia, Turkey, and Palestine, as well as to India and England, before he finally made his way back to Russia thirteen years after he had left it.

The travelogue by Tsikulin appears to be the only one out of a great number of Russian travel accounts of the 19th and early 20th centuries to be composed by a peasant (provided it is authentic). Tsikulin describes the agriculture of the places he visits, as well as the food, clothes, houses, and some customs of the people. He proudly tells his readers how he was able to preserve his Christianity in spite of the sufferings and tortures he endured, and even under

the threat of death. The travelogue contains a number of fantastic passages and confused geographical names. It is written in the simple language of a naturally intelligent person lacking in education.

Il'ya Nikolaevich Berezin was one of the first bona fide Russian orientalists who traveled to Persia. He was born in 1819, to the family of a government official at an industrial plant in Perm', in the Urals. He studied first at home, then at a district school in Ekaterinburg. Later he was transferred to the gymnasium in Perm' at public expense. In 1837, Berezin graduated from the Oriental Faculty of the University of Kazan'. He earned a Master's degree in Oriental Philology in 1841, and in the following year he was sent by the university on a scholarly trip to the Middle East: to Transcaucasia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Constantinople, and the Crimea. His primary goal was to study spoken "Muslim" languages and their dialects: Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, as well as the literatures in these languages. Upon his return from the Middle East, Berezin was appointed Professor of Turkish at the University of Kazan', and then at the University of St. Petersburg, when the Oriental Faculty was moved there in 1855. Of his *Puteshestvie po Vostoku (*"Travels in the Orient"), only the first two volumes were published: *Puteshestvie po Dagestany i Zakavkaz'yu* (Dāḡestān and Transcaucasia) and *Puteshestvie po Severnoĭ Persii* (northern Persia). Berezin had broad scholarly interests and was involved in the development of higher education in Russia and in the intellectual and cultural life of his times. He held various official appointments and, as an "encyclopedic" scholar, left an extensive body of academic and popular works. He died in 1896 (see the bibliography in Calmard).

The travelogues by Berezin are among the most fascinating, comprehensive, and scholarly in the group. The range of subjects treated is amazingly broad. His *Puteshestvie po Severnoĭ Persii* constitutes an encyclopedia of northern Persia in the mid-19th century. Berezin combined several goals in his narrative: he presented not only a detailed description of the route he followed and the cities he visited, but also extensive information concerning various aspects of life in Persia—its economy, architecture, politics, government, rulers, army, history, culture, customs, characteristics of different social groups of Persians, foreigners in Persia, and so on. He includes a detailed description of the cities of Ardabil and Tabriz, and especially of Tehran (about half his travelogue on Persia is devoted to Tehran). He had a special interest in the foreign trade of Persia: his main concerns were Russian interests on the Caspian Sea and in the north of Persia, as well as the

commercial rivalry between Russia and Britain. His two published volumes treat subjects such as trade routes, the range of goods, and their prices and quality. In addition, a whole chapter of his *Puteshestvie po Severnoĭ Persii* is devoted to Moḥarram processions in Tehran. He also described a *taʿzia* performance, translated part of a play, and included it in his narrative. His books contain endnotes, mostly citations from works by European scholars and travelers. The supplements include copies of inscriptions, with translations by the author, tables on trade, and meteorological observations. Some of Berezin's travelogues are embellished with masterly drawings and maps made by the author. The text of his accounts is very dense and detailed, incorporating a great many statistics, and numerous Persian words. Berezin's masterly style, his erudition, talent for narrative, and sense of humor make his travelogues both entertaining and informative.

Leonid Konstantinovich Artamonov, explorer of Asia and Africa, was born into an aristocratic family in 1859 in the province of Kherson. He was sent by the army on reconnaissance missions into northern Azarbaijan in 1889 and to Māzandarān, Semnān, and northern Khorasan in 1891-92. Later he rose to the rank of lieutenant general and commander of the army corps (Vengerov, 1915, p. 32). He was also a member of the Russian Geographical Society. Artamonov's accounts are strictly official: his descriptions of routes, tribes, and the local inhabitants are written from the standpoint of their potential usefulness for the advance of Russian troops into Persia. The possibility for such an advance is expressed directly in the articles dealing with Khorasan and other northeastern areas. Other topics of interest to him are the Persian army and its resources, government administration, and trade. Artamonov pays considerable attention to the political and military rivalry between Russia and Britain in Persia. His narrative is clear and cogent, betraying utter indifference toward anything unrelated to his specific concerns.

Alexander Vasil'evich Eliseev was a medical doctor and a world traveler. He was born in 1858, in Finland, where his father, a military officer, was stationed. At first he studied at the Department of Science and History at St. Petersburg University, but later he enrolled at the Medical Academy in St. Petersburg. Eliseev graduated in 1882 and served as an army doctor in the Caucasus, Turkestan, the Baltic provinces, Finland, and finally in St. Petersburg. After resigning in 1887, he was assigned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and at the same time he opened a private medical practice. Eliseev traveled widely throughout his life. In his early years, he traveled in the

northern parts of Russia, Finland, the Urals, and in Europe. In 1881 he visited Egypt, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Syria; in 1882, Lapland; in 1884, Palestine, Greece, Sicily, Tunis, Algeria, and the Sahara. In 1886-87 he traveled to Asia Minor: The (Russian) Palestine Society appointed him to study the pilgrim routes from Russia to the Holy Land, while the Geographical Society commissioned him to conduct an anthropological study of the peoples of the Orient. In the spring of 1889 he was sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to escort a large group of immigrants from Russia to Vladivostok. Eliseev used the opportunity to travel in Siberia, then went to Japan and Ceylon. In 1890 the Ministry assigned him to go to Persia for the summer in order to observe the cholera epidemic. Eliseev studied the sanitary conditions in Tehran, Khorasan, Gilān, and Māzandarān. In 1892 he studied the typhoid epidemic in Chelyabinsk. The next year he spent the summer in Bessarabia studying the cholera epidemic, and in the fall of the same year went to Sudan, where he had a narrow escape from the Mahdists. His last trip was to Abyssinia. He died in 1895, having caught croup from a sick child. Eliseev undertook many of his travels on his own modest means. He published extensively (Gruzdev, pp. V-XL; *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, pp. 621-22; Vengerov, 1900, II, p. 356).

In his travelogues about Persia, Eliseev does not mention his medical assignment except at the very beginning of his account. He concentrates on the description of places and cities that he visited (Tehran, Qazvin, Rašt), on the people as social types, on their customs and ethics. The author maintains an emotional distance from the local inhabitants, who seem to exist in a different dimension, and whose country and lives he observes only with the purpose of reporting. His narrative also contains several stories—among them an account of his trip to a Zoroastrian tower of silence—and reports of his contacts with some local rulers. Eliseev wrote in the detached manner of a professional journalist. His descriptions are thorough, competent, and smooth.

Anastas Fedorovich Benderev was a Bulgarian and Russian military writer. He was born in 1859 in Tyrnovo (Bulgaria), served as Deputy War Minister in Bulgaria, and was a major general in the Russian army, commanding the 1st Brigade of the 1st Turkestan Cossack Division (Vengerov, 1900, I, pp. 14-15; Vengerov, 1915, p. 54). In 1902 he was sent to northern Persia on a reconnaissance mission for the army.

In his written account Benderev gives descriptions of the routes, terrain, geography, population, economy, and trade of northern Persia. The goal of his research is defined as military: his central concern is the accessibility of the

region for Russian troops in case of their advance into Khorasan. Among his other concerns are Russian and Persian politics vis-à-vis the Turkman tribes, and the condition of the Persian army. The report is written in a dry, unemotional manner, and was published as a sumptuous oversized volume in a red binding with golden edging. It contains tables and maps, and is marked "Not To Be Made Public."

S. Lomnitskiĭ was most likely an engineer. A mining company sent him to Persia in 1898, together with a mining engineer named Kurmakov. Their assignment was to negotiate the exploitation of ore in the province of Azarbaijan with the Persian government. Lomnitskiĭ and Kurmakov went to Tehran through Anzali and Rašt, and stayed there for a while. They traveled from Tehran to Mašhad-Sar and from there by sea to Bandar-e Gaz, in order to study mineral deposits along the coast of Māzandarān, returning to Russia in 1900.

The travelogue written by Lomnitskiĭ is probably the most exciting and well-written Russian account of Persia. He is interested primarily in the people and their habits, everyday life, and ethos. The topics Lomnitskiĭ covers are numerous: women, family life, houses and bazaars, etiquette, different ethnic and social groups—each with their peculiar customs. Lomnitskiĭ also addresses such subjects as the Persian army, Islam and the mullahs, crimes and prison conditions, and the British in Persia. Interestingly, he is silent about his own mission, and apart from his short introduction we know nothing about how he and his companion went about accomplishing their stated goal. He says that he had an audience with the shah, so it can be assumed that their mission to Persia was highly regarded. What makes the book fascinating reading is the stories, anecdotes, and the author's own observations, many of them funny and told with mild humor. Lomnitskiĭ peoples his book with many characters: he is interested in every individual he meets and willingly communicates with people from all walks of life. Unlike most of the other travelers, he has a lot of sympathy and understanding for the local people and is not inclined to generalize. His description of his little friend and Persian teacher Fāṭema—an orphan girl whom he wanted to adopt—is charming and unforgettable. His portrayals of Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah and his Prime Minister Amīn-al-Solṭān are flattering to the point of being naive. Again, unlike most other travelers, Lomnitskiĭ tries to be positive and tolerant in most of his judgements and conclusions, even on such sensitive subjects as Islam. His interest in Persian culture is marked with a certain degree of respect: he

quotes some Persian songs in Russian translation and devotes a whole chapter to a detailed description of *taʿzia*. Lomnitskiĭ's style and tone are those of a talented writer and a good-natured man. The book is illustrated with forty-four illustrations of landscapes, groups of people, and individuals, including a number of women.

Dmitriĭ Belyaev was a civilian diplomat who traveled extensively in Persia. He spent some time in Mašhad in 1902. In the summer of 1903 he was sent to Persia by St. Petersburg University to study the language. In 1905, being in the diplomatic service, Belyaev stayed in Persia as a "student of the Russian Imperial Mission" and was assigned to serve as Acting Secretary at the consulate in Kerman and in Bandar-e ʿAbbās. During that period, Belyaev made several trips in eastern and southeastern Persia. By 1907 he held the position of Secretary at the consulate in Kermān, and later became Secretary of the consulate in Tabrīz. In 1909 Belyaev spent some time in Persian Kurdistan.

Accounts by Belyaev, written in the official administrative style, give descriptions of routes, terrain, population, and agriculture. Though a civilian, he usually evaluates the routes from the military point of view. He seems to be equally interested in the military and commercial objectives of Russia in Persia, so that exposure of the intrigues of the British in Persia plays an important role in his reports. His articles provide little information about his personal experiences on his travels and usually do not go beyond the above-mentioned topics. However, in his other works, such as *Otchet o poezdke po Persii* (Report on a journey in Persia) and especially in "Ot Ashkhabada do Meshkheda" (From Ashkhabad to Mašhad), he gives his observations on various subjects, such as sayyeds, Qajar princelings (*šāhzādas*), Muslim fanaticism, Babis, and Jews in Persia. Belyaev has an amazing eye for detail, evident, for example, when he talks about the use of uniforms and personal seals in Persia or about the sacred stones on the road to Mašhad. His article on Kurdestan and on what he calls "Russian interests in Kurdestan" covers various topics related to the Kurdish tribes: their shaikhs and their form of Islam, their clothing and arms, their ethos and their attitude toward the Persians.

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