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ARTICLE

"Betrayed into the Hands of the Enemy": The 1795–96 Russian Investigation of the Death of Hedayat-Allah Khan of Gilan

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Abstract

This article examines the Russian investigation of the death of Hedayat-Allah Khan, who ruled Gilan from the mid-1750s until his death in 1786. Using Russian consular reports and records of the 1795 Russian investigation of his death, the article offers two major conclusions. First, Hedayat-Allah Khan ruled a Caspian-centered polity linked to the Russian consulate and trade through partnerships with merchant intermediaries. As Qajar hegemony in Iran emerged by 1786, the consulate and merchants threw their support to Aqa Mohammad Khan. Second, the 1795 Russian investigation of his death was opened by Catherine II to solidify alliances in response to Qajar claims to Tiflis in 1795. Shifting Russian strategic priorities under Emperor Paul removed the need for this investigation.

Keywords: Aqa Mohammad Khan Qajar; Caspian Sea; Erekle II; Georgia; Gilan; Russo-Iranian relations; South Caucasus

On November 14/25, 1795, the Russian Empress Catherine II issued an edict (*ukaz*) to Admiral Vasiliĭ Chichagov.[1] She ordered the admiral to open an investigation into a crime committed nine years earlier on the shores of northern Iran. The empress required Chichagov to investigate the 1786 killing of Hedayat-Allah Khan Fumani, the semiautonomous ruler of Gilan, on Iran's coast along the Caspian Sea. In October of 1786, armies sent by Aqa Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar Dynasty, pursued Hedayat-Allah Khan from his capital in Rasht to the Russian consulate at Anzali. Russian diplomats denied Hedayat-Allah Khan passage on their ships, and he was killed on the shore. His death ended a relationship between the ruling house in Rasht and the Russian diplomatic and commercial complex at Anzali that dated to the time of his father, Haji Jamal Fumani, in 1750. Nearly a decade after Hedayat-Allah's death, Catherine II commanded Chichagov to establish a special investigative commission that included naval and army officers, officials of the College of Foreign Affairs (the forerunner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established by Peter I), and a representative of the St. Petersburg Criminal Court.

The circumstances of Hedayat-Allah Khan's death are clear from chronicles produced for the Qajar court. The initial account of these events appears in the history of Mohammad Fath-Allah b. Mohammad-Taqi Saru'i, who wrote the court-sponsored chronicle of the rise of the Qajars in the late 1790s. Following a series of victorious campaigns in central Iran, Aqa Mohammad Khan attempted to subdue Gilan in 1786. This was the third Qajar campaign into Gilan since Aqa Mohammad's return from captivity at the Zand court in Shiraz in 1779.

[1] The Russian state used the Julian calendar during the eighteenth century, and both Julian and Gregorian dates are given here.

After a mediated peace ended the first campaign, Aqa Mohammad attacked Gilan a second time in the autumn of 1781. Hedayat-Allah Khan escaped to Baku by sea, after which the Qajars entered his palace at Rasht and "collected the taxes" (*baj va kharaj*) due to the treasury.[2] Despite this defeat, Hedayat-Allah Khan returned to power early in 1782. When the Qajars invaded in 1786, he fled from their armies toward the shore, as he had done five years earlier. Forces led by Mostafa Khan Davolu Qajar and Soleyman Khan Qovanlu Qajar followed the Gilani ruler from Rasht to the coast. Hedayat-Allah Khan's escape plan failed this time. One of his former vassals from Talesh shot him and his body fell into the Caspian Sea. His head was recovered and sent to Aqa Mohammad Khan.[3]

Nearly a decade later, a panel of military and judicial servitors in St. Petersburg revisited the case. They collected testimony from diplomats, naval officers, and Armenian and Russian traders at Astrakhan. Both Catherine and the team led by Chichagov reinterpreted the khan's death as the shameful betrayal of a steadfast ally of the Russian Empire, exposing him to the brutality of an implacable and vicious enemy, Aqa Mohammad Khan. Catherine wrote in her edict that "the deed was done beside one of our ships, from which followed the plunder of his renowned wealth [lit. 'property'] and the betrayal of his children into the hands of the enemy, Aqa Mohammad Khan."[4] Catherine formed the judicial commission to review the actions of Consul Dmitriĭ Skilichi and his predecessor Ivan Tumanovskiĭ.[5] At the time of the Qajar invasion, Tumanovskiĭ had recently returned to Gilan on the orders of General Pavel Potemkin as a special political envoy to manage Russia's response to the rise of Qajar hegemony. As Catherine wrote to Chichagov, the events of 1786 brought "obvious doubts upon the officials then employed in Persian affairs, that they not only aided in the success of the army of Aqa Mohammad Khan, but betrayed his [Hedayat-Allah's] children, fleeing to our protection."[6]

This version of events simplified and rewrote a complex relationship in which personal bonds of merchants and consuls with the ruler or landed elites in Gilan structured the khan's relations with the consulate in the port of Anzali. The khan's standing with the merchants shifted over time as each party sought to gain a greater share of the prosperous silk economy of the southern Caspian. The relationship between khan and consul thrived under Consul Ivan I͡ablonskiĭ and Consul Giorgiĭ Merk in the 1770s but turned hostile in 1778 under the translator Ivan Vanslov and remained so under Tumanovskiĭ and Skilichi.

The new interpretation of Russo-Gilani relations in St. Petersburg derived from the circumstances of 1795, not 1786. As Russian military officers and diplomats scrambled to respond to the impending Qajar invasion of eastern Georgia in that year, the investigation was part of a larger project to solidify trust in Russia as a reliable ally in the eyes of rulers of the South Caucasus.

There is a small but growing field of research on the Caspian Sea and the relations between Iran and Russia in the eighteenth century. The role of the Russian consulates in the politics and economy of post-Safavid Iran remains an underexamined aspect of this literature, although some significant works do exist. These have largely addressed state-to-state relations between St. Petersburg and Nader Shah or the first Qajar shahs.[7]

[2] Saruʾi, *Tarikh-e Mohammadi*, f. 69r–69v.

[3] Ibid., f. 118v.

[4] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, ll. 6–6ob.

[5] Skilichi was consul from 1784 to 1788. The Russian transliteration of his name is used here, although when writing dispatches in French he also wrote his name as "Demetrius Schilizzi," transliterated from the original Greek.

[6] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch.1, ll. 7–7ob.

[7] Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 22–45; Rashtiani, "Iranian-Russian Relations," 163–82. Muriel Atkin argues that the Russian Empire was drawn into Iran and the Caucasus by imperial competition with the Ottomans, by commercial pursuits, and at the instigation of its intermediaries and allies in the region. Russian imperial entanglements deepened in response to political conditions on the ground. Russia's rulers developed an interest in colonies in dialogue with European justifications of overseas empire. Its diplomats in Iran framed matters in terms of Iranian barbarism and hostility, distorting relations in the region around these narratives. Russian expansion to the south coincided

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In Russian, a far larger and very rich body of scholarship exists, though it has tended to focus on the military and political priorities of the Russian state, the place of the Caucasus in Russian strategic thinking, and the flow of goods and their impact on the Russian economy. Early studies considered the rise of Russia as a liberating force, removing the "Persian yoke" from the peoples of the Caucasus; these works gave considerable attention to the "Caucasian War" extending into the mid-nineteenth century in Circassia, Chechnya, and Daghestan, in the North Caucasus in what is now the Russian Federation.[8] Major advances were made in this field in the Soviet period, although the framework of the progressive "unification" of the Caucasus to Russia and the impact of feudal relations in Shirvan predominates; Gekhar Mamedova has questioned this view and examined the phenomenon of Russian imperialism in the South Caucasus.[9] Scholarship on trade between Russia and Iran and the role of Armenian commercial networks in it is perhaps best developed.[10] More recently, Oleg Nikonov has linked Russian strategic priorities in Iran to the Petrine project of overhauling the state and finds that St. Petersburg relied on the integration of Russian and Armenian merchants into its approaches to the south to control commercial routes between the Caspian and the Baltic. His work argues for distinct phases in Russo-Iranian relations in the eighteenth century, in which the two states vacillated between contestation and commercial partnership. Nikonov begins to break down the largely state-centered model of analysis by showing the agency of local khans and merchants, while still primarily addressing the strategic concerns of the court in St. Petersburg.[11]

This article seeks to make several new contributions to this field. It focuses on the local elites of the southern Caspian and the role of the merchants, as well as the priorities of the Qajar and Romanov courts. In doing so, it makes use of Russian archival sources from the consulate and the 1795 investigation. Between 1761 and 1779, contacts with the merchants enabled Hedayat-Allah Khan to build a wealthy court and sustain a long period of relatively stable rule in Gilan. The merchants functioned as crucial intermediaries between the consulate and the khan's palace and allowed for prosperity on the northern shores of Iran, despite the economic collapse south of the Alborz in the eighteenth century. This relationship came under strain from 1779 to 1786, when a series of invasions undermined trade in Gilan and forced Hedayat-Allah Khan to look for other sources of revenue. When the Qajars invaded Gilan in 1786, the merchants and Russian diplomats on the ground in Anzali shifted their loyalties, helping to facilitate the consolidation of Qajar power and refusing to intervene in the killing of Hedayat-Allah Khan. They made this decision to preserve their commercial interests as Gilan came under the rule of Aqa Mohammad Khan. As the Qajars and Russian Empire prepared for war before and immediately after the September 1795 Qajar sack of Tiflis, Russian officials returned to the death of Hedayat-Allah Khan to build the case for war and reassure the khans of the South Caucasus of Russia's reliability as an ally. This article examines this case from three sides of the Caspian, seeking to understand the life and death of Hedayat-Allah Khan as viewed from Iran, Shirvan, and St. Petersburg.

with the rise of the Qajars, leading to overlapping territorial and ideological claims. Goodarz Rashtiani has treated this period through a framework of Iranian sovereignty that was challenged by the "quiet encroachment" of the Russian Empire. Unlike Atkin, who combined her interpretation of state-to-state relations with a focus on the agency of diplomats in the Caucasus and Iran, Rashtiani largely examines these questions at the imperial and nation-state levels of analysis.

[8] Butkov, *Materialy dl͡ia novoĭ istorii Kavkaza*; Dubrovin, *Istori͡ia voĭny i vladychestva russkikh na Kavkaze*.

[9] Markova, *Zakavkaz'e i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenii͡a*; Guliev and Mochalova, *Prisoedinenie Azerbai͡dzhana k Rossii*; Mamedova, *O pokhode V. Zubova v Azerbaĭdzhan*. Markova also places the Caucasus in the context of Russia's rise as a power on the European stage and its imperial competition with France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire.

[10] Kukanova, *Ocherki po istorii Russko-iranskikh torgovykh otnosheniĭ*; Kukanova, *Torgovo-ėkonomicheskie otnoshenii͡a Rossii i Irana*; T͡sukht, *Torgovl͡ia s vostochnymi stranami i vnutreniĭ rynok Rossii*. Nina Kukanova has argued that growing Russo-Iranian trade was entangled with shared strategic interests in anti-Ottoman cooperation. Along with A. I. T͡sukht, her work has addressed the intermediary role of Armenian trading networks and provided valuable statistical data on the volume of trade and the commodities exchanged in the Caspian.

[11] Nikonov, *Iran vo vneshnepoliticheskoĭ strategii Rossiĭskoĭ Imperii*.

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The Khan in Rasht and the Anzali Consulate

Following a ten-year occupation of the Caspian coast after the collapse of the Safavids, the Russian Empire withdrew its armies from Iran between 1732 and 1735. In exchange for the removal of these forces, Russian diplomats negotiated terms that structured their empire's commercial and diplomatic relationship with Iran until 1804. The Treaty of Rasht (1732) and subsequent supplementary Treaty of Ganjeh (1735) provided the legal foundation for relations across the Caspian Sea until the first Russo-Iranian War (1804–13) and the Treaty of Golestan (1813). The Treaty of Rasht required Russian withdrawal from Lahijan and its dependencies within one month of signing. It also stipulated the return of all territory up to the Kura River (in today's Republic of Azerbaijan) within five months.[12] Significantly, the agreement granted tariff-free trading rights to Russian subjects for all goods imported into Iran, for Iranian goods exported to Russia, and on those items passing through from other locations, including India.[13] The treaty allowed for the mutual exchange of diplomatic representatives to promote commercial relations, and mandated their financial support and lodging by local authorities.[14] It also guaranteed restitution to Russian subjects for merchandise stolen during periods of disorder.[15] The Treaty of Ganjeh, signed in the South Caucasus while Nader Shah campaigned there against the Ottomans in 1735, fixed the border of the two states at the Sulak River in Daghestan. This latter agreement required officials in Gilan to support a resident consul in Rasht. It also gave merchants of both powers protection from extortion or violent punishments, with a right to appeal to diplomatic representatives.[16]

Until 1750, the primary Russian consulate was located at Rasht, the regional capital of western Gilan, after which it was relocated to the port city of Anzali with the support of the *malek al-tojjar*, Mirza Mansur, and the local ruler, Haji Jamal Fumani.[17] Haji Jamal rose to the highest office in the region after the post–Nader Shah civil wars, when Gilani landholders expressed their "unified opinion" in choosing Jamal to rule in 1749. Russian representatives reported that under this agreement, Jamal would maintain an army of 12,000 men to "ensure no further uprisings and to allow the Gilanis to carry out their industry in perfect security and tranquility."[18] In 1752, Mohammad Hasan Khan Qajar, the father of Aqa

[12] *Dogovory Rossii c vostokom″*, 196.

[13] Ibid., 198.

[14] Ibid., 200.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 207. On the history of the consulate: Ulianitskiĭ, *Russkiia konsul'stva za granitseiu*, 469–661; Safronova, *Stanovlenie i razvitie konsulskoĭ sluzhby*, 177–78. The most complete account of the consulate's history, which opened with the dispatch of Semën Arapov in 1737 to Rasht, is still Ulianitskiĭ's 1899 work, which comprehensively addressed the relationship between Russian diplomats and central authorities in St. Petersburg, as well as the normative obligations of the consular office according to central government instructions. However, this study tends to miss some of the local conditions and interests acting on the consulate. Ulianitskiĭ also paid most attention to the consulate through the mid-eighteenth century, with less discussion of the period after 1770. This consulate, based at Rasht until 1750, then Anzali (a second consulate existed at Baku from 1762 until the 1770s), played a critical role in developing Russia's diplomatic service in the eighteenth century, as E. V. Safronova argued. It also mediated disputes between merchants and local elites and submitted criminal cases among Russian subjects to the magistrate of the Governorate of Astrakhan, creating an extraterritorial judicial authority within northern Iran to respond to instability of the post–Nader Shah period.

[17] *Asnadi az ravabet-e Iran va Rus*, 387, 390–92. *Malek al-tojjar* refers to the chief merchant, serving as factor of the khan, mediator in disputes, and sometimes customs collector.

[18] Ibid., 386. On the life of Haji Jamal: Rabino, "Rulers of Lahijan," 98; Sartippur, *Namha va namdarha-ye Gilan*, 104; Langaroudi, "Gilān vi. History in the 18th Century." Rabino shows that Haji Jamal claimed descent from the historic ruling house of Fuman in the western (Bieh-Pas) district of Gilan. He also identifies Jamal as a maternal descendant of the Eshaq house of Fuman, which was removed from power by Shah 'Abbas I in the late sixteenth century. Sartippur, by contrast, states that Jamal's Eshaqi ancestry was on his father's side. Langaroudi only identified him as a descendant of Amireh Dobaj, which is the name of two Eshaqi rulers of Bieh-Pas, without specifying more about this lineage.

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Mohammad and a major contender for power in Iran from 1749 to 1759, conquered Gilan for the first time. He collected revenues and restored Haji Jamal to his post as a vassal. Saruʾi mentions that Haji Jamal's sister "was honored and married to the late Khaqan [Mohammad Hasan] and for this reason, the above-mentioned [Jamal and his son, Hedayat-Allah Khan] exercised governance [*hokumat*] and the authority of governor [*hokmrani*] alone and completely in Dar al-Marz Gilan."[19] The marriage cemented a political union, binding the ruling family of Rasht and Fuman in a subordinate position to the Qajars.

Gilan suffered severe instability from repeated Zand, Qajar, and Afghan invasions in the 1750s and a plague outbreak in 1759. By the end of the decade, Karim Khan Zand had defeated Mohammad Hasan Khan and emerged as the dominant power in most of Iran. Haji Jamal's son, Hedayat-Allah Khan, assumed power during this period and after some disruption was permitted to remain in office as an autonomous governor by Karim Khan in the early 1760s.[20] Like the Qajars, Karim Khan facilitated a marriage in 1767–68 to solidify his hold over Gilan. His second son and eventual heir, Abu al-Fath Khan Zand, married the sister of Hedayat-Allah Khan. An official Zand chronicle of the period describes her as "a bride worthy of him in purity and sinlessness, agreeable to him." The text also addresses her as *Mahd ʻOlya* (the Sublime Cradle), a title associated with the mothers of shahs throughout the Qajar period, although no son from this union ever ruled in Shiraz.[21]

The commercial and diplomatic order of Gilan in this period enabled Hedayat-Allah Khan to create the wealthiest court in northern Iran. Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin, a botanist from Königsburg traveling on behalf of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the 1770s, noted that Hedayat-Allah Khan received an annual salary from Shiraz equivalent to 25,000 rubles in cash and 5,000 more for the maintenance of his court. In addition to cash, he received 1,500 *man* of silk in pay.[22] But Gmelin estimated his full annual income at over two million rubles, drawn from direct participation in silk and other trades with Russia, as well as from customs revenues and a head tax on Armenian families.[23] Consul Vasiliĭ Ī̂ablonskiĭ visited Hedayat-Allah Khan's palace in 1773, noting that "each wall is made of glass, with gold decoration or at least gold leaf. They say the khan has bought the largest mirror at such a very high price . . . that [the mirrors] in this room must now cost well over 100,000 rubles." Ī̂ablonskiĭ went on to compare the audience hall to the great historic cathedrals of Moscow and Novgorod, although they were not as wide. He wrote that the hall was "so grand and beautiful that it is not possible to describe."[24] This wealth also enabled Hedayat-Allah Khan to build a military force strong enough to project power within Gilan and along the southern and western shores of the Caspian Sea. According to Gmelin, Hedayat-Allah Khan could field between 8,000 and 10,000 troops, with a standing force in Rasht of 1,500. Hedayat-Allah Khan employed this army to collect taxes in the countryside,

[19] Saruʾi, *Tarikh-e Mohammadi*, f. 69r. For another version of this event: Hedayat, *Tarikh-e Rowzat al-Safa-ye Naseri*, j. 9, b. 1, 7088. Saruʾi uses the term *Gilanat* to refer to their domains. This is a plural form and includes the two historic divisions of Gilan Bieh-Pish, east of the Sefidrud, and Bieh-Pas, to the west of the river. Mid-nineteenth-century Qajar court chronicler Reza-Qoli Khan Hedayat notes Haji Jamal's reappointment without mentioning the marriage, although it is crucial to later claims made by Aqa Mohammad Khan to explain his right to rule Gilan.

[20] RGADA, 276, o. 1, d. 613, l. 166ob; Ghaffari, *Golshan-e Morad,* 206. The consular records indicate that Karim Khan attempted to install his own governor, Nazar-ʿAli Khan Zand in Gilan. However, Nazar-ʿAli Khan alienated the landed elites with heavy taxation, causing Karim Khan to fear the possibility of rebellion. Ghaffari shows that Nazar-ʿAli also threatened to raise his own rebellion, which led the Vakil to send Hedayat-Allah Khan, then his prisoner, back at the head of an army to become governor.

[21] Ghaffari, *Golshan-e Morad*, 293–95.

[22] Before standardization, there were several units called a *man* for different commodities and even these varied by time in place. In the 1770s, Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin wrote that silk was traded in units of *man* equaling 13.5 Russian pounds (*funty*), or approximately 5.528 kg. See Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, p. 79.

[23] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia,* 98.

[24] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 645, ll. 60ob–61.

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although Gmelin states that they extracted additional revenues by force and abused the people.[25]

Anzali became the main center of export trade from Iran on a shipping route to Astrakhan via Salyan, Baku, and Derbent. Summarizing the state of commerce at Anzali in 1768, Consul Gavrilo Bogolı̂ubov informed the board of the College of Commerce that Russian merchants carried a large volume of Western European goods, including wool cloth, velvet, and other fabrics, as well as sugar. These goods were purchased in Riga and St. Petersburg and brought to Iran via the Volga route and the port of Astrakhan.[26] Iranians bought leather goods and flour produced in Russia itself, and these products made up two-thirds of imports in 1768, according to Bogolı̂ubov.[27] To this may be added large numbers of iron bars and processed iron goods from the Urals and Tula. In fact, as historian A. I. Ţukht has pointed out, iron and leather were the leading exports over the second half of the eighteenth century, although trade in finished iron goods was small.[28] However, some weapons, tools, nails, and supplies for building reached the southern Caspian at this time. Iron also served a secondary purpose as an alternative to regional copper currencies minted in a decentralized Iran, and it circulated among the Turkmens as well.[29]

In exchange for these goods, the Caspian merchants bought raw fabrics for Russian and other European markets. Ţukht has noted that, until the late 1780s, silk and cotton represented roughly two-thirds of Iranian exports from Anzali.[30] More than any other product, silk attracted Russian interest in Gilan. Silk production methods are attested in many contemporary eighteenth-century accounts of Gilan. In mid-March, cultivators hatched eggs from the previous year's silkworms, carrying them close under their arms or against the abdomen for warmth to allow them to hatch.[31] They then stored the larvae in sieve-shaped baskets in specially constructed reed or wood huts elevated off the ground. They fed the worms mulberry leaves in increasing quantities as they grew.[32] The worms climbed to the upper walls and ceiling of the hut, forming a cocoon with "threads thinner than human hair."[33] After a life cycle of around fifty days, most of the cocoons were placed in lead boilers with hot water, killing the worms and loosening the fibers of the silk, which one person pulled out and another wound around a large spool. The finished spool was about 60 inches around and drawn from sixteen to eighteen cocoons.[34] Workers permitted some silkworms to bore through the cocoon, producing the eggs for the following year and leaving a damaged cocoon, the threads of which were made into the lowest quality silk (*kej*). Silk producers often wadded the *kej* up, rather than spinning it into reels, and they sold it in Ottoman markets.[35] As contacts with Russia expanded and Zand rule brought relative stability, silk output grew. Consul Merk wrote in April of 1777 that output was rising from an estimated 30,000 *man* in the 1740s to 100,000 *man*.[36] Mikhaĭl Chulkov, who wrote a detailed study of the international trade of the Russian Empire in the 1780s, stated that 30,000 poods (about 541.7 tons

[25] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, 98–100. Despite this description, Gmelin characterized Hedayat-Allah Khan as a just ruler in comparison to others in northern Iran, stating that he enacted "uniform and fair" justice and displayed love for his people.

[26] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 644, l. 22ob.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ţukht, "Torgovlı̂a Rossii so stranami vostoka," 94–95.

[29] RGVIA f. 52, o. 1/194, d. 244, l. 1ob; Rading, "O proisshestvı̂iakh sluchivshikhsı̂a pri osnovanii Russkago seleniı̂a," 18.

[30] Ţukht, "Torgovlı̂a Rossii so stranami vostoka," 91.

[31] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, 204; Chulkov, *Istoricheskoe opisanie rossiĭskoĭ komertsii pri vsekh portakh,* 563; Hanway, *British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 17.

[32] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, 204.

[33] Ibid.; Chulkov, *Istoricheskoe opisanie rossiĭskoĭ komertsii pri vsekh portakh,* 564.

[34] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, 204; Floor, *Persian Textile Industry,* 18. Willem Floor gives more information than Gmelin, noting that workers wound threads around the spool using a foot-powered treadle.

[35] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, 205; Hanway, *British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 18.

[36] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 647, l. 36.

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or 83,338 *man*) of silk reached Astrakhan per year, without referring to sales within Iran or in the Ottoman Empire.[37]

As a result, Anzali emerged as a busy port that produced significant revenues for its ruler. With the establishment of Zand authority that was largely stable by 1764, trade recovered from its post-1747 lows. In 1764, the overall volume of trade between Russia and Iran, which had grown steadily in the previous few years, reached 738,804 rubles and 41 kopeks, approaching the nearly 900,000 rubles of the later Nader Shah–period for the first time in over a decade.[38] I͡ukht has shown that after a decline in the late 1760s, these numbers rose again to a high of 1,066,000 rubles in 1787.[39]Anzali was the hub of this trade. By the early 1770s, the town was divided into two sections, with a new district housing only Russian subjects and an Armenian church occupying the town center to link the two sections. It contained around three hundred reed buildings and a large marketplace.[40] Later, Hedayat-Allah Khan expanded facilities for trade, with thirteen caravansaries operating there before fire destroyed much of the town in 1778.[41]

Hedayat-Allah Khan worked through the merchants in Rasht and Anzali to make diplomatic approaches to the consuls. This practice is most evident in the case of David Moĭseev, a Tiflis-born Armenian merchant who had taken Russian subject status. Oleg Nikonov has written about Moĭseev's relationship to the consulate under Consul Bogoli͡ubov in the late 1760s. Using records of the College of Foreign Affairs, Nikonov discovered that Bogoli͡ubov recruited Moĭseev as an informant within the court of Rasht. The consul valued Moĭseev for his access to Hedayat-Allah Khan and for his reputation in the bazaar, the center of economic life in Rasht.[42] However, a letter signed by the president of the College of Foreign Affairs, Nikita Panin, ordered Bogoli͡ubov to abandon this project and stop working with Armenian informants, whom Panin and the other authors of the letter regarded with suspicion. The college appointed Russian students in their place to translate and gather intelligence.[43]

It would be a mistake to see Moĭseev only as an agent of Russian interests. Moĭseev remained a leading figure in the merchant community at Rasht and Anzali, where he investigated complaints against officials and informed the Russians about disputes. He carried out these functions when traders complained to him about coerced loans to a tax-farmer at the port in 1777. He simultaneously acted as market inspector in the city.[44] He also facilitated diplomatic contacts and participated in rituals of welcome and gift exchange. In 1771, Gmelin refers to a "Khwaja David" who met him in Anzali on his arrival, bringing gifts from the court in Rasht, including jams, rice, sheep, chickens, ducks, pomegranates, apples, and citrus fruits.[45] Moĭseev joined merchants Sergeĭ Solomonov, Nazar-ʿAli Rashti, and the tax-farmers of Rasht and Anzali to fulfill the same function to greet Consul Ivan I͡ablonskiĭ in 1772. An officer named Mir Mohammad Hashem greeted I͡ablonskiĭ in December of that year along with *Minbashi* Aqa Hoseyn.[46] They were not joined by "Khwaja David" Moĭseev, who remained at court with the khan during public observances of ʿEid al-Fitr.[47] He finally arrived, accompanied by Sergeev, on December 18/29, 1772. They conversed with the consul from the morning until midday. Moĭseev asked to remain with I͡ablonskiĭ after these official

[37] Chulkov, *Istoricheskoe opisanie rossiĭskoĭ komertsii pri vsekh portakh,* 459.
[38] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 644, ll. 155–156ob.
[39] I͡ukht, "Torgovli͡a Rossii so stranami vostoka," 87.
[40] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, 49.
[41] RGADA f. 276, o.1 d. 648, l. 16.
[42] Nikonov, *Iran vo vneshnepoliticheskoĭ strategii Rossiĭskoĭ Imperii*, 331–32.
[43] Ibid., 332–33.
[44] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 648, l. 2ob–3.
[45] Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia*, 76.
[46] *Minbashi* is a military title, traditionally referring to a commander of 1,000 men according to the Mongol military system.
[47] RGADA f. 276, o. 1, d. 645, ll. 36ob, 43.

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audiences, inviting Armenian and Tatar traders to a reception attended by the tax farmer Aqa Rafiʿ and merchant Nazar-ʿAli Rashti.[48] The consul's journal mentions a second meeting in January 1773, when Nazar-ʿAli, Moĭseev, and Sergeev, "the most trusted men of the khan," met with him. They expressed Hedayat-Allah Khan's hope to return to the "old friendship" that existed between Haji Jamal and the consulate. Through the merchants, the khan assured I͡ablonskiĭ that he would not collect any fees from Russian subjects, despite instructions from Karim Khan to take these revenues.[49] In doing so, Hedayat-Allah Khan positioned himself as the guarantor of Russian commercial privileges assured under the treaties of the 1730s. Moĭseev's activities and profile reveal why Hedayat-Allah Khan promoted his self-image as guarantor of Russian privileges. Merchants like Moĭseev ensured the presence of the consulate and the role of Rasht and Anzali as the main trading centers of the southern Caspian. Unable to collect tariffs from these merchants, Hedayat-Allah Khan grew wealthy and maintained his army and court through trade receipts. The stability of his rule, therefore, depended on stable relations with the consulate to avoid disruptions of commerce.

Early in the spring of 1773, I͡ablonskiĭ went to Rasht in person with the same group of merchant intermediaries facilitating ceremonies. The consul was permitted to stay in the khan's residence in Rasht during his time there. Upon arrival, the leaders of the Armenian and Russian communities, along with Aqa Rafiʿ, led I͡ablonskiĭ into the palace.[50] The following day, a procession that included Moĭseev came into the audience hall. After meeting I͡ablonskiĭ individually at appointed places on the way to the audience hall, leaders of the Armenian and Tatar trading communities at Rasht came third in the procession, entering the courtyard on horseback, attended by servants.[51] Moĭseev and Sergeev personally carried the gifts for ceremonial exchange, including two poods of sugar, coffee, and tea, as well as ten *arshins* (about 7.2 meters) of European fabrics, velvets, and forty sable pelts from I͡ablonskiĭ.[52] During the weeklong stay in Rasht, Moĭseev acted as messenger between the two camps, bringing invitations to the consul to dine at the palace. They exchanged a second round of gifts, including brocade fabrics, ceremonial robes (*khelʿat*), gold sashes, raw silk, and other textiles for members of the consular retinue.[53]

Thus, by the mid-1770s, Hedayat-Allah Khan had established a stable ruling order and opulent court at Rasht through control of the silk trade and close relations with the Russian consulate. The merchant community at Anzali stabilized and enabled this relationship, embedding its own interests in diplomatic ceremony and negotiations. Moĭseev brought the complaints of merchants against Hedayat-Allah Khan to the consuls and provided intelligence to them in Anzali; but he also continued to trade at Rasht and depended on good relations with the court there and between it and the consulate. For these reasons, he acted as a market inspector and mediated contacts between the consuls and both the traders and the court. This complex relationship with the consulate and merchants sustained Hedayat-Allah Khan's power, and its collapse in the 1780s contributed to the decision of Russian officials to abandon him during his final battle with the invading Qajars.

The Crime: The Killing of Hedayat-Allah Khan

Although the rule of Karim Khan Zand established the conditions for relative stability among the largely autonomous regions on the southern shores of the Caspian, a new round of disorders began with his death in 1779. At that time, Aqa Mohammad Khan, the oldest son of Mohammad Hasan and eventual founder of the Qajar dynasty, returned from his long captivity at the Zand court and slowly consolidated his power in the southeastern corner of the

[48] Ibid., l. 45.
[49] Ibid., ll. 47–48ob.
[50] Ibid., ll. 52, 53.
[51] Ibid., ll. 54–54ob.
[52] Ibid., ll. 59–59ob.
[53] Ibid., ll. 65ob–67.

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Caspian. He launched invasions of Gilan in 1780 and 1781. Along with an earlier wave of invasions of Gilan from Talesh, Ardebil, and Tarom in 1779–80, as well as local revolts, these attacks resulted in the imposition of painful tributes on Hedayat-Allah Khan. The Qajars looted his palaces. The invasions and economic disruptions of the 1779–86 period in Gilan led to a political realignment of some of the landholders in favor of Aqa Mohammad Khan. During the first Qajar campaign in Gilan, Hedayat-Allah Khan counterattacked and forced a stalemate, with the two armies skirmishing for forty-five days. Ultimately, the Gilanis relented and sent representatives to Astarabad to present Aqa Mohammad with tribute, or as Saruʾi wrote, "taxes of the treasury" (*baj va kharaj-e divani*).[54] Aqa Mohammad launched a second campaign in the autumn of 1781, which caused more lasting damage to Hedayat-Allah Khan's position, although it ultimately failed to unseat him permanently. Saruʾi describes Hedayat-Allah Khan fleeing in defeat and filled with fear, escaping by ship at Anzali. Entering the palace at Rasht, Aqa Mohammad distributed plunder to supporters and organized the affairs of Gilan.[55]

Hedayat-Allah Khan's relations with the Russian consulate were already deteriorating by the time of these rebellions and invasions. As Hedayat-Allah Khan faced growing hostility from the consulate over outstanding debts, rumors reached the translator Ivan Vanslov in early 1779 of a supposed plot formed in the court at Rasht to kidnap him. The khan tried to reassure Vanslov of his goodwill and offered to write to the governor of Astrakhan to prevent the withdrawal of the consulate.[56] The removal of the consulate to another location threatened Hedayat-Allah's hold on trade and the sources of revenue that allowed him to maintain control over the elites of Gilan. Despite efforts to calm Vanslov, the translator reported his fears and anger to officials of the central Russian bureaucracy and the court. On July 9/20, 1779, Catherine II ordered Grigoriĭ Potemkin to plan a punitive military expedition to Anzali. The goal, in the empress' words, was to make Hedayat-Allah Khan "docile" and force him to honor his obligations, like the rulers of Baku and Quba.[57]

Despite this growing hostility, the Russians appear to have played a significant role in enabling Hedayat-Allah Khan's escape from the Qajar invasion in 1781. As noted above, Saruʾi mentions Hedayat-Allah's escape by sea from Anzali at the end of the campaign. According to Zand chronicler Abu al-Hasan Ghaffari, he fled from the Qajars "to [receive] the assistance of the consul of the Europeans" (*beh estezhar-e vakil-e farang*) with his wives, children, relatives, and three hundred courtiers and servants. Leaving Gilan by sea, he was welcomed in Baku by Fath-ʿAli Khan of Quba and his son-in-law and vassal, Malek Mohammad Khan of Baku. Hedayat-Allah Khan received their hospitality and stayed in Baku for a month, after which they assigned him an army of 3,000 Lezgi troops and 1,000 from Shirvan and Derbent (*Bab al-Abvab*) to retake Gilan.[58] In January 1782, Hedayat-Allah Khan announced his return to Gilan to the consulate. According to Ivan Tumanovskiĭ, a former Kizlyar customs official appointed to serve as consul in Gilan in 1780, Fath-ʿAli Khan of Quba gathered forces from many of the khans of the South Caucasus as part of an alliance with ʿAli-Morad Khan Zand. For this reason, Fath-ʿAli Khan assembled the khans of Javat, Talesh, and Shamakhi, with whom Hedayat had been at war in 1778–79, at Salyan to make peace and solidify their new alliance.[59] The consul's interpretation that the Quban khan was entirely motivated by his support for ʿAli-Morad Khan Zand seems unlikely, given Fath-ʿAli's own expansionist goals at the time and cultivation of a Safavid pretender called ʿAbbas III at Baku in 1783.[60] By 1784, Fath-ʿAli Khan invaded Talesh and Ardebil and made

[54] Saruʾi, *Tarikh-e Mohammadi*, f. 61v.
[55] Ibid., ff. 69r–69v.
[56] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 648, l. 40.
[57] *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva*, 178–79.
[58] Ghaffari, *Golshan-e Morad*, 610.
[59] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 651, ll. 1ob–2.
[60] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 13, ch. 3, ll. 157ob, 342ob.

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their rulers his subjects.[61] It is more likely that some combination of suspicion of the rising power of Aqa Mohammad Khan, Fath-ʿAli Khan's pro-Russian orientation, and a shared interest in maintaining the status quo in the Caspian led to the restoration of Hedayat-Allah Khan by armies from the South Caucasus.

Hedayat-Allah Khan returned to an economically devastated Gilan. Rebels from Ardebil and Talesh had already looted his palace during an uprising in 1779. They cut down mulberry trees to devastate the silk industry before withdrawing from the region.[62] To try to recover some funds and meet demands for tribute from Shiraz, Hedayat-Allah had sent some of his army to produce silk.[63] This decision likely left Gilan vulnerable to the armies of Aqa Mohammad Khan, who captured Rasht and sacked the palace in 1781. To make matters worse, Hedayat-Allah's administration suffered from defections. His former vazir had thrown his support to Mirza Saʿid Shafti (Mirza Zagit [Zahed] in the Russian sources), who seized Gilan from the Qajars while Hedayat-Allah regrouped in Baku. Having returned to power, Hedayat-Allah Khan ordered his vazir's arrest. Given his insecure position after the 1782 restoration, Hedayat-Allah Khan moved from Rasht to Anzali in May of that year. He built a fortified residence for himself and for the families of his retainers near the consulate.[64]

These post–Karim Khan disruptions forced Hedayat-Allah Khan to draw revenues from new fees and taxes on the merchants. This policy led to complaints from the merchants, another constituency that had previously supported his rule. Initially, he assured Tumanovskiĭ that he would "enforce the treaties by force," referring to the tariff-free trading privileges guaranteed to the Russians under the Treaties of Rasht and Ganjeh. He added that "he is bound to be obedient to ʿAli-Morad Khan who forbids [the collection of tariffs]."[65] However, he reversed his policy on tariffs in August of 1782. As a result, a group of merchants from Astrakhan and Kizlyar complained to the consulate. They informed Tumanovskiĭ that the khan justified this decision because "although I promised the consul not to take tariffs from the Russians, and up to now I did not take [them], I must now, as they are taken from our Persians at Astrakhan."[66] Although Hedayat-Allah Khan explained this decision as a reciprocal response to the treatment of his own subjects in Russia, Zand and Qajar extraction of tributes likely forced his hand. He complained about their demands to the merchants from whom he extracted payments, saying, "I have always given 70,000 rubles per year in tariffs to the Vakil Karim Khan, and now it will be to ʿAli-Morad Khan or the Qajars." He cited these tributes as the cause for the new duties at Anzali, even if he presented them as a continuation of his obligations to Karim Khan. He had always managed to offset these costs through engagement in trade and collection of revenues locally. The wave of invasions that followed the Vakil's death cut his access to these sources of revenue, forcing him to take more from the merchants at Anzali and on the roads. He implemented new taxes, with three-quarters of the dues taken from the Russians and the remainder from Iranians at Anzali.[67]

In 1783, Tumanovskiĭ confronted Hedayat-Allah Khan over these duties and an unrelated dispute about the loss of goods the khan had entrusted to Russian naval officers. Tumanovskiĭ appealed to Russia's Caspian Flotilla to intervene. The consul stated in his dispatch to Captain Nikita Baskakov that the khan's army had closed the port and he feared that they intended to seize him and the consular staff. He believed they had only been deterred by artillery brought to the shore to defend the consulate. In response, the khan's forces built a chain of boats to close the harbor and seized islands nearby to prevent the Russians'

[61] Shahvar and Abramoff, "The Khan, the Shah and the Tsar," 28–29.
[62] RGVIA, f. 52, o. 1/194, d. 241, l. 5.
[63] Ibid., l. 7lb.
[64] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 651, l. 14.
[65] RGVIA, f. 52, o. 1/194, d. 241, l. 14ob.
[66] Ibid., l. 18ob.
[67] Ibid., ll. 18–18ob.

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escape.[68] Tumanovskiĭ sent a naval officer named Sozonov to resolve the dispute. Hedayat-Allah Khan countered Sozonov's protests about the closure of the harbor by citing the Russians' obligation to recover his personal belongings that he had entrusted to them for safekeeping. These goods had been lost in a shipwreck, and the khan argued he was entitled to compensation according to the judgment of the empress.[69] When the negotiations failed, Sozonov took one of the warships of the Caspian Flotilla and ran the blockade on March 7/18, 1783.[70] After a short skirmish, Hedayat-Allah Khan sent a team of his closest advisers to negotiate.[71] They agreed to return to "calm and to previous agreements," meaning the tariff-free trade of the Rasht Treaty of 1732. Many of the Gilani elites affirmed their commitment to these terms with their signatures.[72] However, an Armenian merchant and Russian subject named Vartan Petrov complained to Tumanovskiĭ about the collection of brokerage fees at a rate of 2.50 rubles per *man* of silk and of *rahdari*, or tolls on the roads, only five months later.[73]

Dmitriĭ Skilichi, the new Greek-born consul who replaced the ailing Tumanovskiĭ in October of 1784, at first took a pragmatic approach to relations with Rasht, hoping to work with Hedayat-Allah Khan. But in March 1785, Skilichi wrote to Grigoriĭ Potemkin that "it is impossible to be fond of a man of such temper; though he has shown me friendship, it is said to me that each day Hedayat Khan may consent to whatever necessity compels of him." He objected to multiple treaty violations on the khan's part. Still, Skilichi cited similar issues with Fath-ʿAli Khan of Quba and Aqa Mohammad Khan Qajar, leaving no better alternative partner for the Russians on the southern or western shores of the Caspian Sea.[74]

The third Qajar invasion, leading to the death of Hedayat-Allah Khan, occurred in 1786 with some local support. Aqa Mohammad had withstood a long siege of Astarabad by armies of ʿAli-Morad Khan Zand. After defeating them, he advanced rapidly into central Iran and captured Isfahan, after which he turned his attention to Gilan. A group of village-level elites from Talesh joined the Qajar armies under Mostafa Khan Davolu and Soleyman Khan Qovanlu.[75] Qara Khan of Lenkoran, although not actively involved in the campaign, ignored Hedayat-Allah Khan's appeal to send 3,000 troops to defend Rasht.[76] Hedayat-Allah Khan had little remaining support locally. He attempted to fight at Rostamabad, eight farsangs from Rasht, before fleeing north to Pirbazar and from there to Anzali.[77]

Despite Hedayat-Allah Khan's appeals to the consulate on the basis of his loyalty and to his past requests for Russian subject status, Tumanovskiĭ and Skilichi refused to help when he arrived in Anzali. General Pavel Potemkin, then the governor of Astrakhan, sent Tumanovskiĭ back to Gilan in March of 1786 with instructions to establish relations with the Qajars. Governor Potemkin further suggested the exchange of gifts in a formal meeting if Aqa Mohammad could hold onto his territorial gains in the south.[78] These instructions show that Russian officials in Astrakhan and Anzali perceived a shift in the balance of power in Iran toward the Qajars and hoped to maintain their position in the Caspian economy through this transition. For this reason, Tumanovskiĭ stalled in June of 1786 when Hedayat-Allah asked him to take Gilan into the Russian Empire as a protectorate.

[68] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 13, ch. 3, l. 120ob.
[69] Ibid., l. 197ob.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., l. 199.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., l. 203.
[74] RGVIA, f. 52, o. 1/194, d. 350, ch. 3, l. 32.
[75] Ibid., l. 79.
[76] RGADA f. 23, o.1, d. 14, ch. 1, l. 148ob.
[77] Saruʾi, *Tarikh-e Mohammadi*, f. 116r–116v; RGADA, f. 23, o. 1 d. 14, ch. 1, ll. 80–80ob. In Skilichi's account, rebels united with Aqa Mohammad, and they attacked Rasht. Hedayat-Allah Khan then fled to an island across the harbor at Anzali.
[78] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, ll. 131ob–132.

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Tumanovskiĭ insisted on referring the matter to St. Petersburg.[79] The long distance made a timely decision impossible. Skilichi, for his part, continued to argue with Hedayat-Allah Khan about the "abuses" perpetrated against Russian subjects and objected to the khan's efforts to negotiate with Governor Potemkin directly. Even before Tumanovskiĭ arrived, Skilichi seems to have written to Aqa Mohammad Khan, suggesting that Gilan would welcome him as its ruler in place of Hedayat-Allah Khan.[80] This local Russian outreach to Aqa Mohammad does not imply that the consul or political agents in Anzali acted with the support of the court in St. Petersburg. As Muriel Atkin has noted, Catherine II had rejected a Qajar ambassador as a result of the 1781 arrest of Russian officers in Mazandaran. The empress refused to acknowledge Aqa Mohammad as a legitimate authority on the southeastern shores of the Caspian, even as Skilichi and Tumanovskiĭ negotiated with him in Gilan.[81]

To forge relations with the Qajars, Russian diplomatic agents sent naval officers to meet with them at Lahijan. Aqa Mohammad, in turn, relied on the local landholders, many of whom must have had existing relationships with the merchants and officers. Aqa Taqi Khan Shalmani represented Aqa Mohammad at Lahijan, meeting with an officer named Sergeĭ Khastatov, sent by Tumanovskiĭ. The former consul informed Governor Potemkin that Khastatov had delivered his letter, proposing an embassy. In exchange, they agreed to the dispatch of Sami Khan Taleshi to the Russian side for negotiations, of which no record remains in the files of the later investigation.[82]

When Hedayat-Allah Khan fled to the Russian ships, as he did in his escape to Baku in 1781, he was abandoned on shore, turned away from Tumanovskiĭ's boat, and killed. Skilichi later claimed that Tumanovskiĭ acted alone in the crime in exchange for a bribe of 70,000 rubles.[83] Given Skilichi's own negotiations with the Qajar ruler and the testimony of witnesses, it is clear that he also refused to offer assistance. Peter Shishkin, who later commanded Russia's Caspian Flotilla, reported that Skilichi sat aboard the vessel beside Tumanovskiĭ's and commanded both ships because Tumanovskiĭ had fallen fatally ill. Skilichi, therefore, was responsible for refusing to take the khan aboard.[84]

The consulate and the merchants gained several important benefits from their support for Aqa Mohammad in 1786. First, they sought the return of tariff-free trade based in Anzali. To this end, Skilichi petitioned on behalf of several Armenian merchants, asking the Qajars to enforce the treaties of the 1730s and prohibit the imposition of tariffs.[85] In response, Aqa Mohammad issued a *farman* to Soleyman Khan Qovanlu, the new governor, ordering an end to the collection of customs dues from Russian merchants. He required the governor to repay those merchants from whom duties had been taken.[86] Although this concession was short-lived, it reveals Aqa Mohammad's sense of the centrality of these trading privileges to relations with Russia for all rulers in the northern region of the former Safavid lands. Second, the Russian officials hoped to gain a stable trading partner to improve their commerce in Iran's interior. In the spring of 1782, Tumanovskiĭ wrote to the College of Commerce that the potential revenues of the Caspian trade were restrained only by instability in Iran.[87] The sudden collapse of Zand power left the Qajars as the only faction capable of establishing the unified state that the Russian consuls had long hoped would emerge.

Aqa Mohammad also benefited from establishing relations with Russia. First, the consulate withdrew support for Hedayat-Allah Khan, preventing another revival of his authority, as

[79] Ibid., l. 143.
[80] Dubrovin, *Istoriia voĭny i vladychestva Russkikh*, vol. 2, 180–84.
[81] Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 34–35.
[82] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch.1, l. 143.
[83] Ibid., l. 85ob.
[84] Ibid., l. 203ob.
[85] Ibid., ll. 59ob–60.
[86] Ibid., l. 63ob.
[87] RGADA, f. 276, d. 651, l. 3ob.

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happened earlier in the decade. During the campaign, the Qajar armies received gunpowder and other supplies from the consulate as a result of their negotiations.[88] Even more significantly, Gilan was incorporated with its potential as a source for revenue intact, to the extent this was possible after the damage done to its economy in the preceding years. The volume of trade in the Caspian rose considerably in the first three years of Qajar rule in Gilan, although relations began to deteriorate by the end of the 1780s.[89]

War in the Caucasus and a Trial in St. Petersburg

Given that Hedayat-Allah Khan died in October 1786, it is striking that Russian officials took up an investigation more than nine years later, in November 1795. What accounts for this delay?

The decision to launch an investigative commission occurred in the context of growing confrontation between St. Petersburg and Aqa Mohammad Khan over Georgia, Shirvan, and Daghestan in the 1790s. The best-known dispute was over the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in eastern Georgia. This kingdom, ruled by Erekle II since the mid-eighteenth century, was part of a patchwork of local semiautonomous polities that controlled the area north of the Aras after 1747. Zand authority in the South Caucasus was nominal during this period. In the absence of a central authority to replace the Safavids, the Christian east Georgian king contended with numerous Muslim khans, most prominently Ebrahim Khalil Khan Javanshir (d. 1806) at Shusha and Fath-ʿAli Khan (d. 1789) and his heirs in Quba. By the mid-1760s, Fath-ʿAli Khan established himself as the dominant power along the Caspian coast. At times, he held sway over Derbent, Salyan, Baku, Sheki, and many of the numerous dynasties in the mountains of Daghestan.[90] Facing these rivals and the general instability of the post-Safavid world, Erekle II agreed to the Treaty of Georgievsk in 1783, assuring the continuity of the Bagrationi dynasty under a Russian protectorate. As George Bournoutian has noted, the disorders in the region and a desire to consolidate gains against the Ottoman Empire led courtiers in St. Petersburg to embrace the treaty.[91]

By the mid-1790s, relations between the Russian court and the Qajars had taken a negative turn. Aqa Mohammad's half-brother, Mortaza-Qoli Khan, attempted to establish his own control over Gilan with the help of Russia's Caspian Flotilla and the merchants in the late 1780s. Peter Shishkin reported in October of 1788 that Mortaza-Qoli Khan notified another naval officer that he intended "to take no tariffs from Russian subjects and, according to the [Rasht and Ganjeh] treaties, no brokerage fees from silk" after capturing Rasht and Anzali. Although Aqa Mohammad Khan had reopened the port and the consulate in 1786, he soon reversed these policies in response to the theft of property from Hedayat-Allah Khan's palace. He held Russian subjects accountable for this theft and claimed his own right to the treasury of Hedayat-Allah Khan.[92] Although some officers and merchants provided supplies and coordinated strategy with Mortaza-Qoli Khan, Gekhar Mamedova has noted a split between these local actors and the empress's cabinet in St. Petersburg.

[88] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, ll. 78ob–79ob.

[89] I͡ukht, "Torgovli͡a Rossii so stranami vostoka," 87.

[90] For the history of the South Caucasian khanates and their relations with the Zands: Bournoutian, "Prelude to War," 107–8; Varahram, *Tarikh-e siasi va ejtemaʿi-e Iran*, 93; Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, 212–13; Abdullaev, *Iz istorii severo-vostochnogo Azerbaĭdzhana*, 99–100. George Bournoutian gives an overview of the formation of Kartli-Kakheti and the khanates established by Muslim elites to its south and east as an introduction to his work on the 1803–4 siege of Ganjeh by the Russian army and the beginnings of the first Russo-Iranian War. The limits of Zand authority beyond the Aras are mentioned in several works, including those by Perry and Varahram. John Perry notes that Karim Khan Zand had little ability to project power north of the Aras, but he did make some normative claims over the region by recognizing a governor (*belgarbegi*) in Shamakhi. He failed to create marriage alliances there, and G. B. Abdullaev shows that Fath-ʿAli Khan of Quba evaded and ultimately rejected one such proposal to construct a marriage alliance in the 1770s.

[91] Bournoutian, "Prelude to War," 108.

[92] RGVIA, f. 52, o. 1/194, d. 482, l. 3ob.

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Central authorities cut off funds to Mortaza-Qoli Khan in 1791, hoping to maintain trade with Aqa Mohammad Khan as he further consolidated his power in Iran.[93] By 1793, Mortaza-Qoli Khan was defeated, and he fled via Baku to Astrakhan. The consulate was withdrawn from Anzali that autumn, relocating to an island off Lenkoran in Talesh.[94] In 1795, General Ivan Gudovich, commander of Russia's defensive line of fortresses in the North Caucasus, refused to recognize the credentials of Aqa Mohammad's ambassadors at Kizlyar (they had no letter from a recognized shah, only from the governor of Gilan). Meanwhile, the court in St. Petersburg sought to apply pressure on the Qajar ruler to grant a Russian protectorate over the coast. This proposed protectorate would extend from the Caspian and into Azerbaijan to block Ottoman approaches to the Caspian.[95]

By 1795, the two powers found themselves at odds over the question of the protectorate in Kartli-Kakheti. Qajar claims over eastern Georgia were rooted in a territorial notion of the Guarded Domains of Iran and its boundaries in the Safavid past. In his chronicle, Saruʾi recorded the demand of obedience that Aqa Mohammad Khan sent to Erekle II. He wrote:

> according to ancient laws and agreements [*nazar be qavaʿed va qarardad-e qadim*], Georgia was [a possession] of the kings of Iran, [and it was] such . . . since the time of Shah Esmaʿil Safavi until the beginning of our imperial dispensation [*dowlat-e homayun-e ma*]. For this reason, the path of wisdom and the course of wise advice is this, that that *velayat* be placed under the shelter of the foot of the throne.[96]

In a September 1796 letter, written after the Qajars had taken Tiflis, Aqa Mohammad challenged Erekle's right to accept the status of a Russian protectorate, as he had done in 1783. In this text, which has been published in Russian translation, Aqa Mohammad argued that Russia had no legitimate political claims in the region. He regarded the Russians as a people who "from long ago have carried out trade with residents of the Iranian Empire and whose affairs are only in merchant trades."[97] He listed Georgians among the many peoples governed by their own law under a single Iranian monarchy. He also stressed that Georgians bore responsibility for the collapse of the Safavid Empire because of the failures of Georgian troops assigned to defend early eighteenth-century Qandahar and to beat back the Afghan rebels in 1722.[98]

In addition to these assertions of sovereignty, Aqa Mohammad also contested Kartli-Kakhetian claims over Ganjeh. This city (now in the northwest of the Republic of Azerbaijan) was ruled by Javad Khan Ziadlu Qajar, whose family asserted a distant kinship to the Qajars of Astarabad. Seeking protection against Ebrahim Khalil Khan of Qarabagh in 1792, Javad Khan joined the Qajar armies in Shirvan under Soleyman Khan Qovanlu.[99] One Georgian account mentions Javad Khan's participation in Aqa Mohammad's 1795 Tiflis campaign but neglects the competing claims over his khanate. As a result, it presents

[93] Mamedova, *O pokhode V. Zubova*, 8.

[94] Butkov, *Materialy dlĭa novoĭ istorii Kavkaza*, vol. 2, 324–26.

[95] Ibid., 329–30; Mamedova, *O pokhode V. Zubova*, 8–10. Butkov discusses the rejection of this Qajar emissary, whereas Mamedova shows the demand for a protectorate and interprets this demand as referring to the area north of the Aras, called Azerbaijan. This seems unlikely given the usage of "Azerbaijan" in that period and the reference to blocking advances from the Pasha of Baghdad (which places this Azerbaijan further south) in the dispatches cited.

[96] Saruʾi, *Tarikh-e Mohammadi*, 211v–212r.

[97] *Iz istorii rossiĭsko-gruzinskikh otnosheniĭ,* 599.

[98] Ibid., 671–72. The editors of this volume assume that this passage refers to Georgian participation in Nader's 1738 campaign against Qandahar. However, the document refers to Georgian forces at Qandahar "seventy years ago" (*sem′desi͡at′ let tomu nazad*) and to the death of Shah Soltan Hoseyn, which more likely corresponds to the defeat of Georgian forces in the 1722 siege of Isfahan and lack of reinforcements from Vakhtang VI of Kartli (d. 1737). For more on that episode, see Lang, "Georgia and the Fall of the Safavi Dynasty," 523–39.

[99] Saruʾi, *Tarikh-e Mohammadi*, f. 180v.

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the involvement of armies from Ganjeh on the Qajar side as a betrayal, driven by the deceptive character of Javad Khan himself.[100]

Tiflis fell to Aqa Mohammad in September 1795. According to Teymuraz, a son of Erekle II, Aqa Mohammad Khan entered the king's palace alongside Javad Khan for plunder and then took thousands of captives, as well as artillery, back to Tehran.[101] Two Russian battalions were dispatched from the Terek River fortress line to Tiflis, arriving in December. From St. Petersburg, Catherine II ordered Ivan Gudovich to march on Derbent on November 16/27, 1795, only two days after authorizing the investigative commission.[102] The fall of Tiflis to Qajar armies in September of 1795 and its subsequent plunder devastated the city, resulting in the captivity of thousands of Georgians. This episode provided the justification for Aqa Mohammad to take the title of shah, having achieved his ideological project of restoring the boundaries of the Safavid Empire.[103]

It is worth noting that Russian military preparations for a campaign against the Qajars and discussions of how best to defend Erekle II began well before the fall of Tiflis. On April 1/12, 1795, the Russian consul in Constantinople, Viktor Pavlovich Kochubeĭ, reported on Qajar armies near the Ottoman frontier. At this stage, he showed little long-term concern over Aqa Mohammad's ambitions, given his age (which Kochubeĭ significantly overestimated at seventy-five years) and lack of an heir. However, the consul noted Qajar demands for tribute from Erekle "which Georgia paid to Persian shahs since antiquity."[104] By July, Kochubeĭ was convinced that Aqa Mohammad would attack, but he believed that the difficulty of taking the fortress at Shusha in the mountains of Qarabagh would slow the Qajar armies. For this reason, Russian forces would need to arrive in Georgia by the following spring.[105] That same month, Erekle's emissary in St. Petersburg, Garsevan Chavchavadze, appealed to the Russian court to intervene and fulfill its obligations under the Treaty of Georgievsk, promising the "gratitude of the Tsar [Erekle] himself and of all of Georgia."[106] By August 16/27, Kochubeĭ still favored a less confrontational path, preferring to "buy off" Aqa Mohammad while providing subsidies that might allow Erekle to build up his own defenses. As an alternative to his preferred course, Kochubeĭ suggested that Catherine send Gudovich with an army into Georgia and Shirvan for reconnaissance in the spring.[107]

In November 1795, the Russian court moved to solidify its alliances and assert its military power in response to the sack of Tiflis. On November 23/December 4, Chavchavadze appealed to the court again, requesting two regiments to restore control of Tiflis and bring provisions over the mountains. He worried that Aqa Mohammad's inducements to Lezgi raiders in the north would, along with winter conditions, delay relief until spring. Still, Chavchavadze assured Catherine that these troops could march south safely via the tract of St. Stephan (Stepantsminda).[108]

In response to these conditions, the Russian central state prepared for war with Qajar Iran and prioritized the cultivation of local allies. Catherine II had already instructed Gudovich to advance into the South Caucasus before news of the fall of Tiflis reached the Russian capital. As P. G. Butkov has noted, Russian forces on the Terek were not prepared for the speed of the

[100] Teĭmuraz [Tsarevich], *Vz͡iatie Tiflisa Aga Mogammed Khanom v 1795 godu,* 18.

[101] Ibid., 12–13.

[102] Teĭmuraz mentions these two battalions (ibid., 26). For more detail on the campaign, see Butkov, *Materialy dlîa novoĭ istorii Kavkaza*, vol. 2, 348.

[103] Hambly, "Āghā Muhammad Khān and the Establishment of the Qājār Dynasty," 129. Aqa Mohammad took this title of shah at Ardebil and on the Moghan Steppe only after capturing Tiflis. However, the investigation files reveal that supporters of Aqa Mohammad already had used the title unofficially in correspondence with the Russian consulate in August of 1786, after he captured the Safavid capital of Isfahan. Sami Khan of Talesh claimed to represent the "new shah" to Tumanovskiĭ at that time, helping to facilitate his support for the Qajar conquest of Rasht: RGADA, f. 23, d. 14, ch. 1, l. 243.

[104] *Iz istorii rossiĭsko-gruzinskikh otnosheniĭ,* 586.

[105] Ibid., 587.

[106] Ibid., 588.

[107] Ibid., 590–91.

[108] Ibid., 593.

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Iranian advance, but Catherine had already given orders to reinforce Tiflis in September.[109] As mentioned above, Catherine sent new instructions to Gudovich on November 16/27 to respond to Iranian moves by marching into Shirvan. She instructed him to seize Derbent for its strategic location commanding the mountain pass through the Caucasus. Gudovich also was to secure alliances with the Shamkhal of Tarki, who ruled the area between the Terek and Sulak Rivers along the Caspian Sea, as well as the Usmi of Qaraqaytaq in southern Daghestan.[110] For the Russian army, these were the strategic "keys to Persia," and these allies would need assurances of St. Petersburg's protection.[111] In 1796, Catherine II authorized a new and larger campaign led by Valerian Zubov, the brother of prominent courtier Platon Zubov. Valerian Zubov intended to capture key points throughout Shirvan, but he needed to cultivate local partners among the khans. His commands to Major-General Alexander Rimskiĭ-Korsakov reveal the strategic value of restoring these partnerships. He made control of Ganjeh and Erevan high priorities, to secure the approaches to Tiflis and recruit additional forces from regions with large populations that could be used to threaten Iranian cities further south. Zubov planned to attack the southern Caspian shores by sea, overextending Iranian armies and opening the South Caucasus to Rimskiĭ-Korsakov and their local allies.[112]

It was in this context that Catherine II authorized the investigation of the death of Hedayat-Allah Khan, with the intention of projecting an image of Russian justice and trustworthiness as an ally against the Qajars.

Catherine's November 14/25 *ukaz* establishing the investigative commission offered two main reasons for prosecuting the case. First, Catherine appealed to the shooting of Hedayat-Allah Khan as moral blight on the Russian Empire. Its officials betrayed an ally and left his family to suffer at the hands of an enemy whom she regarded as barbaric. Hedayat-Allah Khan had "a few years earlier given many assurances of [his] sincerity and good inclination to us and to our realm and [maintained] his provinces, in which our factories were located, in perpetual security."[113] In making this claim, Catherine reimagined the relationship between the ruler of Gilan and the Russian Empire. His appeals for subject status had been rejected several times in the 1770s and 1780s, and disputes over taxation and treaty violations rose sharply in the final years of his life. Catherine added that the khan's personal possessions had been loaded onto Russian ships and that he expected aid for his escape to Astrakhan. These goods were plundered and no diplomats or officers were held to account. She stated that "such evil crimes against humanity cannot be left without punishment . . . [and they demanded] a fitting investigation, exploring the atrocities of these inhumane crimes."[114] The investigation begins from a position of moral obligation and the belief that Russia must uphold a long-standing alliance threatened by Qajar savagery. This narrative fails to acknowledge the complexities of Russo-Gilani relations before 1786 or the khan's own interests in instrumentalizing that partnership with the consulate since the 1760s.[115]

[109] Butkov, *Materialy dl͡ia novoĭ istorii Kavkaza*, vol. 2, 343–44.

[110] On the Usmi and the Shamkhal: Floor, "Who Were the Shamkhal and the Usmi?" These two rulers controlled territories north and west of Derbent long before the Safavid era. By the late eighteenth century, each had entered into relations with the Russians, received stipends (though the Usmis were more reluctant to do so), and had long-standing relations with Fath-ʿAli Khan of Quba (d. 1789), who was the brother-in-law of the Shamkhal Mehdi Beg (r. 1797–1830).

[111] Butkov, *Materialy dl͡ia novoĭ istorii Kavkaza*, vol. 2, 349.

[112] *Iz istorii rossiĭsko-gruzinskikh otnosheniĭ,* 601–3.

[113] RGADA f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, l. 8ob.

[114] Ibid, ll. 8ob–9.

[115] See Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 35, 44; and Mamedova, *O pokhode V. Zubova*. As Muriel Atkin has noted, assumptions of Eastern greed and venality overshadow Iranian motivations in the consular correspondence, leading to claims that the conflict after the fall of Anzali in 1786 was driven by demands for bribes. Gudovich assumed that the Qajars would accept such bribes to give up claims to sovereignty over Kartli-Kakheti in 1795. The trend of taking such characterizations of Iranian officials in these dispatches at face value has been observed elsewhere, including in the case of Valerian Zubov's 1797 campaign against the Qajars. The acceptance of claims of benevolent protection

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Secondly, a deep concern for winning over the autonomous rulers of the Caspian region pervades the *ukaz* of November 14/25. In her introduction, Catherine informs Chichagov that "such inhuman and odious crimes could not but have consequences, one of which is suspicion that [Russian] officials employed in those countries could participate in such vile deeds [again]."[116] She further adds that the betrayal of the Hedayat-Allah Khan had damaged Russian prestige, undermining all confidence in agents of the empire. The investigation, bringing "harsh punishments," would address this lack of trust.[117] These passages link the 1786 murder to the preparations for war in 1795. At that moment, Russia's military commanders hoped to build new partnerships in the South Caucasus and along the coasts of the Caspian Sea. Trust in the reputation of Russian officials was paramount; it could be restored through the investigative process and the punishment of guilty parties. As noted above, Catherine sent orders to General Gudovich to occupy Derbent, Baku, and Shamakhi, and to control the routes from the interior to the Caspian Sea. She issued this order only two days after authorizing Chichagov's commission, further signaling the commission's role in a larger effort to reassure allies as a prelude Gudovich's and Zubov's campaigns.[118]

The investigative commission existed as part of a broad range of responses to Qajar claims over Tiflis. Catherine II hoped to restore alliance networks that had benefited Russian trade in the Caspian since the 1730s. Gilan became a part of the rationale for war against the Qajars, and the investigation was a sign of intent to defend Russian clients, including Kartli-Kakheti. As the *ukaz* makes clear, this episode must have caused "revulsion at our [Russia's] intentions, sowing a complete lack of trust and exciting just indignation and disregard toward [our] government."[119] The investigation contained the potential to rebuild the trust upon which Gudovich and Zubov would need to depend. In this way, it is representative of other special imperial investigative commissions in Russia, carving out a space separate from ordinary courts of law and under the direct control of the empress to address an immediate state interest.

The Investigation and Verdict, 1795–96

Chichagov's commission carried out the investigative work using two methods. First, the commission asked questions of suspects, including Skilichi and naval officers and merchants with close ties to Tumanovskiĭ. They required suspects to respond to questions "in clean conscience, [under] oath, and [with] honesty, hiding nothing of the truth, [and] viewing all that he presents as true." These questions covered a wide range of issues, including personal background, details of the witness's responsibilities in Iran, and activities of others that had been witnessed.[120] In the second stage of evidence gathering, commission members checked this testimony against instructions and reports filed in 1786, as well as the dispatches and accounts sent by naval officers.[121]

Although the circumstances of the case differed from most common trials in courts at the *uezd* (sub-province) and *gubernii͡a* (province; "governorate") levels, this style of investigation bears many similarities to investigative measures elsewhere before the Great Reforms in the mid-nineteenth century. From 1716, Russian trials followed a practice of interrogation that began with the collection of relevant evidence and character information about the suspect by police. After this, a questionnaire was presented to the accused, with all answers recorded

of Christians from Iranian barbarism has been critiqued by Mamedova, who identifies the Zubov campaign as the consequence of a long-standing Russian expansionist and colonial project in the Caspian.

[116] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, l. 8.

[117] Ibid., ll. 9–9ob.

[118] Butkov, *Materialy dli͡a novoĭ istorii Kavkaza*, vol. 2, 345, 349.

[119] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, l 8ob.

[120] Ibid., l. 71.

[121] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 2, ll. 1–11.

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by a scribe. These answers were checked against witness testimony in contested cases.[122] Special commissions like the one formed by Catherine II for the Gilan investigation followed this procedure but stood outside the ordinary legal system. The most famous of these cases, the trials of the Decembrists in 1826, exemplifies this phenomenon, when a sense of direct threat to the state resulted in prosecutions under special conditions.[123]

In 1795, investigators presented a set of ten questions, issued in the name of the empress, to former Consul Skilichi. They called for information about relations with Hedayat-Allah Khan during Skilichi's term as consul, and about Tumanovskiĭ's activities. The investigators also demanded to know the circumstances of Hedayat-Allah Khan's death, the reasons he was turned away from Russian ships and his children were handed over to the Qajars, what reports were made on the matter in its aftermath, and what documents Tumanovskiĭ left behind when he died in Iran later in the fall of 1786.[124] To this, they added a requirement that all questions be answered under oath, promising "approval before the monarchical throne," for truthfulness, but noting that "any non-disclosures will attract the sovereign's anger and legal penalty."[125]

In his responses, Skilichi formed a narrative in which the now-deceased Tumanovksiĭ shut him out of decision-making to advance his own self-interested machinations. Skilichi claimed that Tumanovskiĭ facilitated the transition to Qajar rule in exchange for bribes. According to Skilichi, his predecessor met with Hedayat-Allah Khan's physician, Zeyn al-ᶜAbedin, who had his "profound trust . . . and was an eternal friend" of Tumanovskiĭ.[126] Together with Hedayat-Allah's brothers, ᶜAsker Khan and Jaᶜfar Khan, Zeyn al-ᶜAbedin hoped to negotiate terms for his own escape to Astrakhan.[127] Tumanovskiĭ also received several chests containing Hedayat-Allah Khan's personal belongings and bearing his seal to prevent any opening or theft. Hedayat-Allah Khan had asked him to carry these goods to safety across the Caspian Sea.[128] In this way, Tumanovskiĭ followed a well-established practice in Russia's relations with the autonomous rulers of the Caspian and northern Iran. By acquiring clients with their own claims to power, Russian officials could gain political leverage. This practice provided insurance against reversals of the political status quo, offering the client asylum in Russia, in exchange for which Russian diplomats and officers could use this alternative ruler to lead resistance or apply pressure on Iranian authorities.[129] Agents of the Russian state had employed a similar policy on the steppe during the early

[122] LeDonne, "Criminal Investigations Before the Great Reforms;" Baberowski, *Autokratie und Justiz*, 19; Antonov, *Bankrupts and Usurers of Imperial Russia*, 48–62. LeDonne argued that this was an "inquisitorial style," intended to produce confessions, whereas Baberowski took a more nuanced view, claiming that this system bound the legal procedure to the will of the autocrat and the central bureaucratic structure under his or her power because bureaucrats collected and edited the written evidence, and then presented it to a judge in written form. More recently, Sergei Antonov has shown that a more balanced gathering of evidence could take place in cases on debt and lending, especially those involving high-status gentry and military officers. At times, this alternative model produced ambiguous results due to the weight of moral arguments and the status of litigants.

[123] Wortman, *Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness*, 42.

[124] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, ll. 69–70ob.

[125] Ibid., l. 70ob.

[126] Ibid., l. 75.

[127] Ibid., ll. 75–75ob.

[128] Ibid., 74ob.

[129] For this practice in Iran and the Caucasus: RGVIA f. 52, o. 1/194, d. 269, ll. 15ob–16; *Akty sobrannye Kavkazskoĭu arkheograficheskoĭu komissieĭu*, 857. From the dispatches of Captain Marko Voĭnovich in RGVIA, it is clear that Voĭnovich maintained correspondence with Mortaza-Qoli Khan Qajar during his standoff with Aqa Mohammad on Ashuradeh in Mazandaran in 1781. He hoped that Mortaza-Qoli Khan would emerge as governor with Zand support. Voĭnovich simultaneously reopened contacts with Aqa Mohammad to hedge his bets. Similarly, Jaᶜfar-Qoli Khan of Khoy appealed to General Tsitsianov for support, having lost control of the city at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1804, Jaᶜfar-Qoli Khan relocated to Sheki, by then under Russian occupation, at the beginning of the first Russo-Iranian War. Perhaps the most famous case of this practice of Russian cultivation of exile claimants is that of Bahman Mirza Qajar in Tiflis and Shusha after the accession of Naser al-Din Shah in 1848.

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modern period.[130] Despite the accepted use of this practice, Skilichi pleaded total ignorance of the discussions. He claimed that Tumanovskiĭ informed him that he "knew his own responsibility and had special instructions, and that Skilichi should not interfere in his affairs." Skilichi replied that his own orders from General Pavel Potemkin were at odds with Tumanovskiĭ's statement, requiring that Skilichi "should know of all occurrences . . . and [except] in extreme circumstances, give his agreement."[131] Tumanovskiĭ, however, drew a distinction between their responsibilities, stating that he had no need of consultation or approval from Skilichi, whose portfolio only applied to matters of trade.[132]

This version of events put distance between the two ex-consuls, allowing Skilichi to denounce Tumanovskiĭ as a singular bad actor. His testimony showed Tumanovskiĭ secretly sending representatives to rebel landholders, such as Allahverdi Khan and Azlar Khan of Talesh, to prevent Hedayat-Allah's escape from Anzali. He also portrayed Tumanovskiĭ as responsible for the transfer of power to Aqa Mohammad. The landholders, although nominally subject to the ruler of Rasht, opened negotiations with Mostafa Khan Qajar. As a result, Tumanovksiĭ sent gunpowder, shot, and other supplies to the Qajar army.[133] Skilichi claimed that they worked through intermediaries among the Armenian traders of Anzali, along with personal attendants of Tumanovskiĭ.[134] He repeated rumors of a 70,000 ruble bribe, promised by Aqa Mohammad Khan, which led Tumanovskiĭ to refuse aid to Hedayat-Allah when he reached his boat off the coast of Anzali.[135] Although already ill when he escaped to the harbor, Tumanovskiĭ "ordered two of his people to push their boat away" from the Gilani khan who asked for their protection.[136] Tumanovskiĭ then turned over the chests filled with Hedayat-Allah Khan's possessions, as well as his sons, to Qajar officers. These chests were plundered and, according to rumors, contained "pearls, precious stones and gold bars that produced amazement." Mostafa Khan Qajar ordered the men to send the remaining chests unopened to Aqa Mohammad at Tehran.[137]

Skilichi, therefore, placed the full responsibility at the feet of Tumanovskiĭ, who died before returning from Iran. His defense depended on his own exclusion from political affairs and a secret corrupt compact between Aqa Mohammad Khan and Tumanovskiĭ. It was built on the established caricature of Iranian greed and corruption that pervades the correspondence of Russian officials in the Caspian during the eighteenth century.

Investigators came to doubt Skilichi's portrayal of events by referring to his own and others' contemporary reports in 1786, as well as the dispatches of General-Major Peter Shishkin. Shishkin had been sent by Pavel Potemkin to provide naval support during the Qajar attack on Gilan. Citing Shishkin and the reports of his subordinate, Captain Fëdor Aklecheev, the commission found that Skilichi and Sergeĭ Khastatov had personally carried firearms and other supplies to the Qajars in coordination with Tumanovskiĭ. Furthermore, both former consuls had agreed to the 70,000 ruble payment.[138] Their willingness to facilitate the transition to Qajar rule may have had its origins in Pavel Potemkin's instructions, which, in addition to asking them to gather intelligence and work together to prevent plunder of Russian property, required the two officials to send gifts to Aqa Mohammad, Hedayat-Allah Khan,

[130] Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met.* As Khodarkovsky argued, the Kalmyk people, who arrived near the lower Volga from Inner Asia in the seventeenth century, initially perceived their relationship with Russia as an equal partnership. Russian authorities exploited internal conflicts through their clients after 1724, which allowed the introduction of greater Russian influence and king-making. The Kalmyks were then drawn further into the Russian economy during the eighteenth century because their elites came to rely on stipends and Russian commodities.

[131] RGADA, f. 23, o.1, d. 14, ch. 1, l. 76.

[132] Ibid., l. 77.

[133] Ibid., ll. 78ob–79ob.

[134] Ibid., l. 82.

[135] Ibid., ll. 85ob–86.

[136] Ibid., l. 84.

[137] Ibid., l. 88ob.

[138] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 2, ll. 3–3ob.

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and the Zands in Shiraz, to ensure stability of tariff-free trading relations in the Caspian regardless of the outcome of the war.[139] This instruction referred to an earlier message from Skilichi, who advocated that Russia abandon Hedayat-Allah Khan as early as April of 1786 and portrayed him as deceitful. Skilichi argued that "we can prevent a treacherous ruler [from having control] of such a place where necessity requires the presence of a consul.[140]

The commission ultimately ruled against Tumanovskiĭ and Skilichi. Its findings noted that Tumanovskiĭ had been removed from his role as consul in 1784 due to conflict with Hedayat-Allah Khan. Their hostile relationship undermined trade, but Tumanovskiĭ had nonetheless been sent back to Anzali with orders that included removing the khan to Astrakhan for his safety. The commission also found that Skilichi lied in numerous reports after the fact, at one time claiming to have no instructions to aid the khan's escape, although he acknowledged receiving these orders elsewhere in the files. Finally, they sent a letter in early 1786 to Qajar commanders encouraging the attack and refusing all help to a former ally, who was then killed.[141] Both were guilty of coordinating a bribe (which was never paid), and Skilichi failed to investigate Hedayat-Allah Khan's death. This failure was made clear in his letters to Gilani officials.[142] Skilichi, Tumanovskiĭ, Khastatov, and another officer named Vartan Kalmykov were deprived of all ranks and noble status. The three surviving convicts were sentenced to labor in Siberia.[143] Skilichi's crimes also were judged worthy of corporal punishment, but due to his noble status at the time of the offense he was exempted from such treatment under the 1785 Charter to the Gentry.[144] Kalmykov and Khastatov were similarly exempted from corporal or capital punishment, although the justification in their case was that they had committed their crimes at the instruction of Tumanovskiĭ. Each of them lost his naval rank.[145] The commission then sent instructions, approved by the Senate, to Larion Nagel′, Governor-General of the Irkutsk Viceregency, regarding their sentences and exile in Siberia.[146]

Various merchants and customs officials also faced accusations that surfaced during the investigation, but all were acquitted of any wrongdoing. During his time as consul, Tumanovskiĭ worked closely with Astrakhan-based merchants to ensure relief from newly imposed tariffs and *rahdari* collections. Vartan Petrov faced pressure from Hedayat-Allah to lend goods on credit so that the khan could meet his obligations to the Zand court in 1779. Petrov complained to Tumanovskiĭ in 1782 of brokerage fees imposed on the sale of raw silk.[147] According to Shishkin's testimony, Petrov returned with Tumanovskiĭ in 1786 to act as his translator and belonged to a small circle around the former consul that carried his messages and negotiated on his behalf. This group included Khastatov and merchants Sagatel′ Moĭseev and Avet Isaev.[148] After conquering Gilan, Aqa Mohammad Khan demanded their arrest and that they be turned over to his officials on suspicion of stealing goods from Hedayat-Allah Khan's treasury. His property and wealth belonged to the Qajars as conquerors and rightful rulers. Aqa Mohammad assessed this stolen property at a value of two

[139] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, ll. 126–128. Tariff-free trading rights were guaranteed to subjects of the Russian Empire in Iran under the Rasht and Ganjeh treaties of the 1730s. This report in the investigation file frames the maintenance of this privilege as "protection against oppression" and as a means "to ensure the flow of continued expected benefits." The reference to oppression of the merchants appears often in consular reports about the imposition of tariffs and *rahdari* tolls throughout the period.

[140] Ibid., l. 129.

[141] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 2, ll. 5ob–6ob.

[142] Ibid., l. 7.

[143] Ibid., l. 1ob.

[144] Ibid., l. 8ob; *Polnoe sobrannie zakonov Rossiĭskoĭ Imperii*, 347.

[145] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 2, l. 11.

[146] Ibid., l. 30.

[147] RGADA, f. 276, o. 1, d. 651, ll. 18–18ob; RGADA f. 23, o. 1, d. 13, ch. 3, l. 473.

[148] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 1, ll. 224ob–225.

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million rubles.[149] Additionally, rumors circulated among the merchants in Astrakhan that the head of the city's customs office, Minas Dil͡ianchev, and Governor Pavel Potemkin themselves planned to betray Hedayat-Allah Khan, to steal his immense wealth.[150] The commission found no evidence to support the charge and held that no other merchants and sailors were guilty and that they found no witnesses other than those already consulted.[151]

Although no real evidence emerged in the investigation to implicate the merchants or Astrakhan-based officials, this finding also prevented any disruption to the Russian court's priorities in the Caspian Sea. The merchant networks held unique importance to diplomatic relations with the khanates of the southern Caspian and to the economic priorities of the Russian state in its southern borderlands.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the rulings of the commission came too late to provide any greater advantage to Russia during its 1795–97 confrontation with Aqa Mohammad Khan. The political rationale for punishing Skilichi, Khastatov, and Kalmykov was to restore trust among rulers of the Caspian littoral, but circumstances rendered it obsolete. Zubov's campaign yielded the Russians some significant early victories. On May 10/21, 1796, Russian armies stormed the fortress of Derbent. The victory proclamation issued there hailed the bravery of the Russian soldiers, whom its author called "sons of the fatherland, sons of Catherine that breathe with courage and live with honor" who had taken the city and subdued the Lezgis.[152] But, as Muriel Atkin has noted, the campaign was poorly planned. The army lacked adequate supplies or men to garrison the cities it captured.[153] The death of Catherine II in November 1796, barely more than a month before the commission issued its opinion and sentence, along with the assassination of Aqa Mohammad Shah in the spring of 1797, ended the threat of war until 1803. It also removed the Russian Empire's immediate need to provide justifications for that war. The new emperor, Paul, recalled Zubov's army, beginning what Maziar Behrooz has characterized as a "period of disengagement" between the two states, in which the Russian Empire repudiated many policies of the Catherinian era and turned to a more antagonistic relationship with Britain that forced St. Petersburg to soften its posture toward Iran.[154] The special investigative commission was bound inextricably to the military expansion of the Russian state in the Caspian. Deprived of this purpose, it nonetheless took on its own momentum independent of those interests once the case began. Consequently, it ended with the conviction of two military officers and one living former consul, sentenced to hard labor in Irkutsk for their role in the death of Hedayat-Allah Khan in Gilan.

The investigation began with an appeal regarding the criminality of the consuls' betrayal of Hedayat-Allah Khan and the abandonment of his sons to the Qajars. It appears, however, that Aqa Mohammad Khan and his nephew and heir, Fath-ʿAli Shah, retained the sons as political hostages and at one time hoped to use them to secure their control over Gilan. The Qajars held Hedayat-Allah Khan's sons in Tehran. Fath-ʿAli Shah sent one of them, Hoseyn ʿAli, back to Gilan to recapture the region from the ruling family of Shaft. In 1799, Hoseyn ʿAli killed an enemy of his father, Aqa ʿAli Shafti, and was later assassinated

[149] Ibid., ll. 201–201ob.

[150] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 2, ll. 20. On Dil͡ianchev and his role among the Armenians in Astrakhan: Khachaturi͡an, "Naselenie armi͡anskoĭ kolonii Astrakhani," 86. V. A. Khachaturi͡an showed that although the growing Armenian community of Astrakhan largely maintained separate institutions from the city administration, the customs office was an exception. This resulted from the prominent role of its members in regional trade, for which Russian officials invited them to settle in the city. Dil͡ianchev was one of several Armenians who headed this office, in addition to Ivan Khodjamaev in 1782 and Simon Ivan in the 1790s.

[151] RGADA, f. 23, o. 1, d. 14, ch. 2, ll. 20–20ob.

[152] Prince Lieven Papers, f. 18.

[153] Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 41–42.

[154] Behrooz, "From Confidence to Apprehension," 53.

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as an act of retribution.[155] The family of Hedayat-Allah Khan retained a significant place within the Qajar administration of Gilan, providing local administrators in Fuman into the early twentieth century.[156]

Although the Russian investigation of Hedayat-Allah Khan's death did not achieve its intended purpose, it reveals significant features of the relationship between Iran and Russia in the eighteenth century and the place of the Caspian Sea in that relationship. First, access to ports and commodities shaped the politics of the southern Caspian during this period. Hedayat-Allah Khan's ability to incorporate local landed elites into his rule and build wealth through the silk trade sustained his grip on power, while also exposing Gilan to the ambitions of expansionist rivals in northern Iran. His ability to control the region depended on a web of bonds between the palace in Rasht and the landholders, the merchants, and the consulate, which facilitated the export trade via Anzali. Second, this episode reveals the interconnectedness of the territory of today's Iran with the South Caucasus and Russia during the post-Safavid period. The 1782 Quban-led restoration of Hedayat-Allah Khan reveals a shared economic and political space, held together not only by a common Safavid past but by an economic and diplomatic order that linked Anzali, Salyan, Baku, and Derbent to the Volga Delta. Qajar competition with Russia for control of Ganjeh and eastern Georgia polarized this space between two expanding powers that both sought to consolidate their hold over commercial routes and advance claims to sovereignty. This contest emerged first in Gilan after Hedayat-Allah Khan's death in the dispute over his treasury and in the subsequent Russian support for Mortaza-Qoli Khan. It spread from there to the South Caucasus. The investigative commission made sense for Russian court officials in 1795 because it allowed the empire to publicly set right the crimes of the past decade in a way that signaled their intentions for Georgia and Shirvan. Finally, Hedayat-Allah Khan's death and the trial reveal the complexity of Iranian relations with Russia during this period, demonstrating a disconnect and competing interests between the court in St. Petersburg and its local agents in Iran. This complexity requires further examination with attention to the specific conditions created in the Caspian, where merchants and diplomats often pursued their own priorities alongside their service in the liminal space between imperial Russia and post-Safavid Iran.

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[155] Rabino, "Rulers of Lahijan," 98–99; Afsharian, *Tarikh-e Shaft,* 325–26.
[156] Rabino, "Rulers of Lahijan," 99–100.

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