

ON THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PERSIAN QASID DEDICATED TO NAPOLEON

Keywords: *Persian qasida, Napoleon, Fath-Ali Shah, Franco-Persian diplomatic relations, Persian Ode, Joseph Rousseau*

In the present article we focused on the *Persian qasida, 19 bayts to the glory of Napoléon*. This manuscript in *nasta'liq* calligraphy is kept in the catalog of Persian and Turkish manuscripts at the University Library of Languages and Civilizations in Paris. It is not signed or dated. These documents are established by Dr. Francis Richard (March 2014), and we thank him for providing us this material.

Persian qasida 19 bayts to the glory of Napoleon is represented in three rows. In the first and second rows, there are six bayts, in the third – seven bayts. In the list the contents under the title *Persian qasida 19 bayts to the glory of Napoleon* should mean Napoleon's praise, but from the all nineteen bayts, distributed in three rows it is clearly seen that it equally concerns Napoleon, as well as Fath-Ali – the shah of Persia. Therefore, it is not clear why is the *Qasida* entitled so, especially since the original has no title at all.

In the first bayt of the first row there are localized the territories of the crowned persons – the West and the East; there are declared the identities of these rulers – the crowned person of the West is Napoleon, and that of the East – the shah-in-shah – Fath-Ali shah. The both rulers are represented as very powerful persons.

Both monarchs are represented as the strongest persons in the first, third and the fifth bayts of the second row. In the second bayt there is an allusion to the diplomatic relations between France and Persia, in the fourth bayt we have to understand Russia and England as their common enemies. In the sixth bayt Napoleon is compared to the attacking whale (crocodile, monster), which indicates to the expedition of Egypt, and the fierce lion is Faht-Ali Shah – here we have an obvious attempt to connect the new dynasty of Qajar tribe of Turkish origin to the vanished glory of Persia.

In the first, second, fifth, sixth and seventh bayts of the third row there is the praise of the two rulers again. In the third bayt there is again an allusion to the French-Persian diplomatic relations. Nile, mentioned in the fourth bayt, is related to Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, and in the fire of hostility is meant the first war between Russia and Persia eighteen o four- eighteen thirteen (1804-1813).

So, in these nineteen bayts both of the monarchs – Napoleon and Fath-Ali shah – have been represented as “magnificent and noble sovereigns”, “impartial judges”, “having divine nature”. But it should be noted that Napoleon is mentioned first. “Persian qasida...” is rich in metaphors typical for the Oriental poetry. This fact testifies a good knowledge of Persian literature by the author.

When and who wrote the Qasida which is equally dedicated to Napoleon and Fath-Ali Shah? For this purpose, we will touch on Franco-Persian diplomatic relations in the early 19th century.

In the beginning of 19th century the First Consul decided to include Persia in the expedition against India. The Consul of France in Baghdad Jean-François Xavier Rousseau, the great supporter of this idea, prepared the ground for the Franco-Persian relationship. At the request of Napoleon, Jean-François Rousseau was ready to leave for Tehran as an Ambassador. His 24-year-old son, who knew many oriental languages and was preparing for the diplomatic service, was impatiently waiting for the opportunity to prove his devotion to the emperor and receiving his order to leave for Persia.

Here the question arises, where did the young Rousseau learn the oriental languages so well?

It should be noted, that the Rousseau family had settled in Persia in the beginning of the 18th century Jacques Rousseau, the father of Jean-François, had left for Persia in seventeen o five (1705) together with the embassy sent by Louis fourteen (XIV) to the court of Shah Soltan-Hosayn. He stayed in Isfahan, married an Armenian woman and became a shah's jeweler. After his death his son, Jean-François

Rousseau, born and raised in Julfa, from seventeen fifty-six (1756) for forty years was in a commercial and diplomatic service of France in the Near East. Rousseau knowing many oriental languages – Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and Armenian, knew the Persian literature so well that Kerim-Khan himself requested him to recite the poetry by Ferdousi, Saadi, Hafez and other Persian poets. J.-F. Rousseau was married with Anne-Marie from Sahid family, who were interpreters from father to son. So, Joseph Rousseau, a descendant of mentioned families also knew Persian, Turkish, Arabic languages, and was an excellent connoisseur of the oriental literature.

So, Joseph Rousseau, a descendant of mentioned families, and he grew up in Baghdad, also knew Persian, Turkish, Arabic languages, and was an excellent connoisseur of the Eastern literature. Yet in 1802, proud of his son's knowledge, J.-F. Rousseau wrote the following to *Chargé d'affaires* of France in Constantinople, his old friend Pierre Ruffin: "Presently my son writes a letter in verse (épître) in Persian. He is much improved over the last year in this language, and writes the Turkish as a correct and elegant style. The people in Baghdad, who know these two languages, are really surprised that a young Frenchman has learned their different sciences so well".

We assume that the Persian Ode sent to Ruffin may be the manuscript of the "Persian qasida 19 baiti in honor of Napoleon", preserved in the catalog of the University Library of Languages and Civilizations in Paris. It was written after French Foreign Minister Talleyrand commissioned Jean-François Rousseau to write an essay on Iran in 1804.

To convince Napoleon, that his son was an excellent expert in the affairs of Persia, in 1806 Jean-François Rousseau presented his son, Joseph, as the only author of the work – *Tableau général de la Perse moderne ou mémoire géographique, historique et politique sur la situation actuelle de cet Empire* – written at the request of Napoleon. So, Rousseau the father tried to actively involve his son in Napoleon's oriental policy, and to secure a diplomatic career for him.

Tableau starts by the words about the governance of a state named by Joseph Rousseau as *Maxime Politique de Saadi*. It's followed by "Translation of the Persian Ode in honor of His Majesty Napoléon Emperor of France King of Italy", in which Rousseau included the issue of Persia too: "Glory of Napoléon reached even the boundaries of Kandahar and Sistan". Persia is presented as "the lion with its shining back shakes with pride its ample mane", and Tehran is called "as the daughter of the ancient Persepolis". By this comparison Rousseau connects contemporary Persia with its ancient glory, and explains that the lion with half-sun on his back was the ancient emblem of Persia. In other stanza he notes that when the news of Napoleon's victory in Austerlitz (2.12.1805) reached Tehran, Fath-Ali Shah ordered to celebrate this publicly. He calls Napoleon the Gallic Rustam, comparing him with the famous Persian heroes – Jemshid, and Nader Shah.

Young Rousseau's opinions about the Persian poetry given in the "Tableau..." are interesting too. He calls Persian language very soft, beautiful and harmonic, no idiom could be compared with the elegance and grace of their composites. Saadi, Hafez, Jami and all other lyric poets will be always pleasant to read, and Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* can obtain such a stable reputation as the "Iliad" of Homer.

The "Ode" is created according to the examples of Oriental poetry, and written in compliance with Persian-Arabic genre of lyric, Qasida. It is one of the first examples of fusion of *West-Eastern* classic literary works, and perhaps nothing like this has ever been created on this issue that time.

On April 12, 1807 Napoléon considered it urgent to organize an expedition against India, and he assigned the Brigadier-General Claude Mathieu Gardane as Minister Plenipotentiary at the court of Persia, his brother, Paul-Ange-Louis Gardane as the first secretary of the mission, and Rousseau the son only the second secretary. Joseph Rousseau arrived to Persia from Baghdad in October 1807. In the letter to his father, he wrote that at the audience, held on October 28 Fath-Ali Shah received him quite favorably, talked with him about the political events in Europe, and inquired several times about Rousseau the Father. The Shah was very surprised that he knew Persian and Turkish languages so well and spoke to him in both languages for testing him. In the same letter, Rousseau writes that because of the richness that he saw in the palace he could not dare to offer Shah those modest gifts, he had with him. It is not known what Joseph Rousseau intended to serve to the Shah, and whether the Qasida was among these gifts.

It should be noted that the young Rousseau translated into French and provided comments on several ghazals of Fath-Ali-Shah and his court poet, Fath-Ali Khan. One of the copies of this small anthology, named *Zinat al-mada'ih* – “Panegyric ornaments”, was gifted by Fath-Ali Shah to the General Gardane. This translation is included in the book by Rousseau, *Description du pachalik de Bagdad*, Paris, 1809.

Unlike Fath-Ali Shah’s and Faht-Ali Khan’s language, the “Persian qasida”, is more laconic and its content is not only laudatory, but reflects the French-Persian diplomatic relations of that time and thus it has also a political significance. Many poems or odes have been written about Napoleon, but the mentioned “Persian Kasida” and “Persian Ode” are among the first works written on this subject.