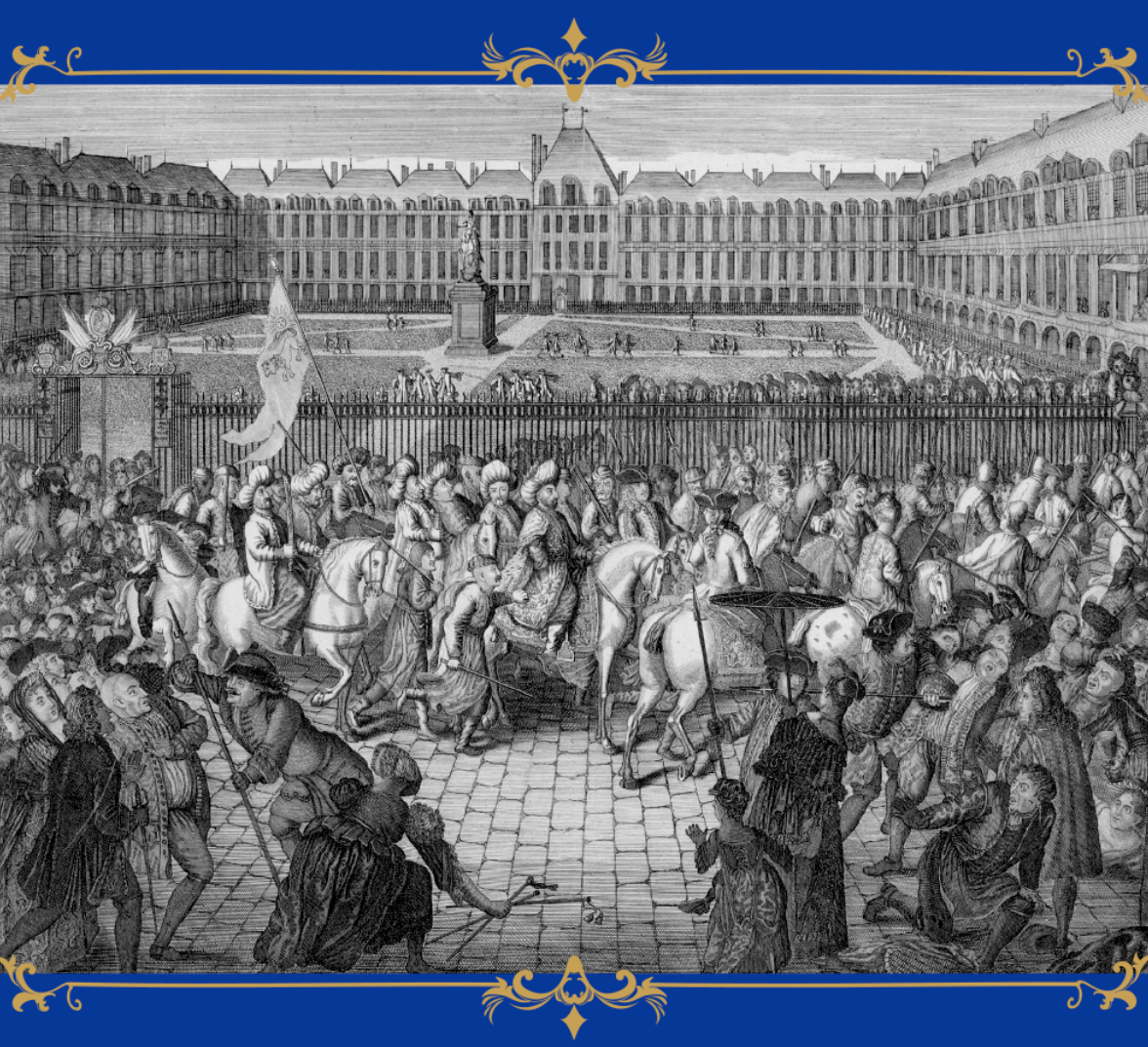

# THE PERSIAN MIRROR

## Reflections of the Safavid Empire in Early Modern France

SUSAN MOKHBERI

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*For Emud, Xavier, and Darius*

# CONTENTS

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# Introduction to the Mirror

In 1666, Jean Chardin, a French Protestant jeweler, celebrated for his travels and writings on Persia, witnessed a remarkable event: the coronation of the eighth Persian shah of the Safavid dynasty. Chardin details the ceremonies in *Le couronnement de Soleïmaan troisiéme, roy de Perse* (The coronation of Soleiman III, king of Persia), published in France in 1671 with a preface that laid out the parallels between the French and Persian monarchies. Chardin portrays a filial bond between the two monarchies. The Persian shah, he declares, calls "Your Majesty [Louis XIV] his brother" due to their shared grandeur. Chardin proclaims, "The King of France is the greatest Emperor in Europe as he [the shah] is the most powerful Prince in Asia."[1] He emphasizes his admiration for Persia and its likeness to France: "Of all the vast Empires of the Orient . . . there is not one that should not yield to Persia, for the temperature of the air, for genius that is more reasonable than other places and is closest to our own, and for all the excellent and rare things that are found there in abundance."[2]

Chardin then proceeds to identify the uncanny similarity between the French and Persian royal insignias: "*The Sun is the Emblem of great Kings:* Everyone knows that the entire body of the Sun is the device of our great Monarch, and all that have visited Persia . . . . cannot ignore that the Sun rising behind a Lion is the hieroglyphic of the Princes who reign."[3] Chardin's book, in fact, opens his dedication to the king of France with an illustration of the combined crests. In the print (see Figure I.1), a large sun sits in the center, symbolizing Louis XIV; it is flanked on either side by a lion with a rising sun behind it, representing the Safavid Empire. The emblem of the sun linked the Safavids and Bourbons. When Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, paraded through the Paris streets, his entourage proudly carried the Safavid flag, with its lion-and-sun symbol. Prints of the Beg's parade illustrated this flag, and the Safavid motif's relation to France's Sun King would not be lost on its viewers. Once Chardin established the connection between the two monarchies, he moved between praise for the Persian shah and the Safavid government and criticism of them, setting Persia up as a model of comparison or "mirror" for France. Montesquieu, again, in his *Persian Letters* of 1721 would use Persia to reflect on France.

Except for a handful of travelers such as Chardin, missionaries, and a few diplomats, France and the Safavid Empire had relatively little contact throughout the seventeenth century. Yet Chardin was not alone in his strong comparison of France and Persia. Missionaries had noted affinities in the early seventeenth century. By the dawn of Louis XIV's personal reign in 1661, Persians had become central to the crown's image when Charles Le Brun,

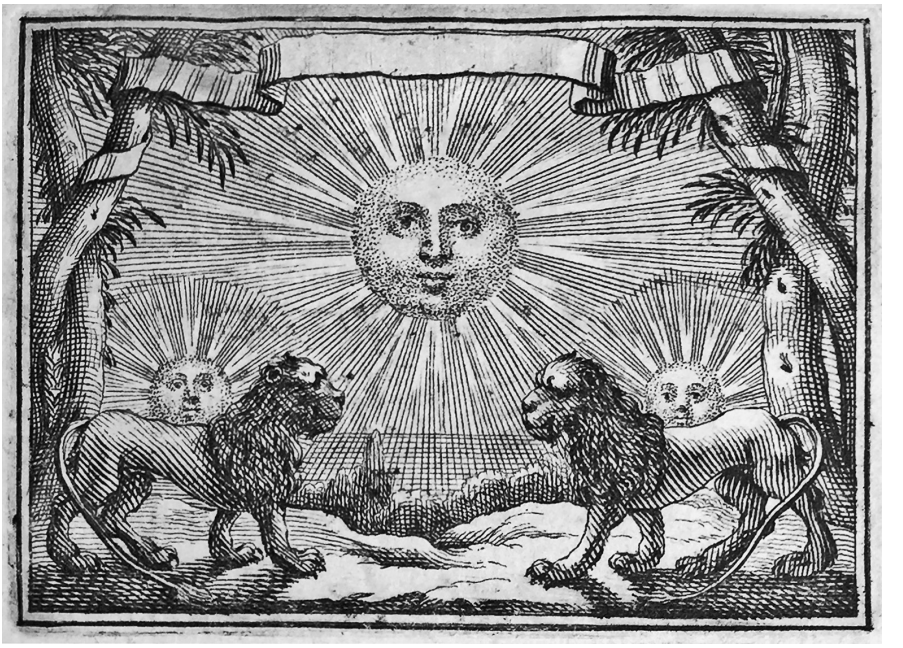

*Figure I.1* Louis XIV, the French "Sun King," is represented by the large sun in the center. The lion and sun, symbolic of the Persian Safavid Empire, sit on each side. Louis XIV often performed as Apollo the Sun God in his ballets. The Safavid symbol's origins can be traced to ancient Mesopotamia. *The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles*

the royal painter, chose them to illustrate the crown's virtues in his painting, "The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander." Just as the Sun King's reign opened with Le Brun's allusions to Persia, it closed with another momentous occasion linking the two monarchies: Louis XIV's final act of grandeur was the reception of the Persian ambassador to France in 1715. At the meeting, Louis XIV echoed Chardin's image of similar monarchy as he sat on the throne borrowing luxurious effects of the shah's court.

In the seventeenth century Frenchmen drew parallels between themselves and Persians that helped them analyze their own kingdom. *The Persian Mirror* illuminates our understanding of early modern France by revealing how France defined itself in relation to Persia. It shows how the French developed a distorted vision of Persia, one shaped by the aspirations of missionaries, travelers, courtiers, diplomats, and the Sun King himself.

This long French preoccupation with Persia explains why the Enlightenment author Montesquieu, like other French philosophes, would have selected Persia as a way to think about the issues confronting ancien régime France. Previous studies of Montesquieu focus on his 1721 *Persian Letters* as a starting point for his critique of French monarchy and society. However, a long history predated Montesquieu's use of Persia as a mirror of France. An investigation of the cultural, intellectual, and political context that shaped the French imagination of Persia transforms our understanding of

the period before the *Persian Letters*. Moreover, the examination of the distinctive role Persia played in molding French identity is key to considering new approaches to early modern East-West relations.

Seventeenth-century France and Persia were connected through diplomatic contacts, images, material objects, and texts, which together laid the basis for an imagined comparison.[4] "Connected histories" and new global histories shed light on historical topics through an approach that transcends national borders.[5] Through these methods, we learn how people, information, merchandise, artistic techniques, and myths flow across political and cultural boundaries.[6] Yet in our turn toward global topics, we may forget the role that national concerns, ambitions, and tastes play in understanding cross-cultural encounters and their resulting representations.[7]

The pages that follow describe intersections between France and Persia spearheaded through efforts of the French state to collect Oriental manuscripts, establish trade agreements, and bolster the image of Louis XIV through diplomatic spectacles. In turn, the Persian Empire itself played a role in French conceptions of Persia by sending an ambassador to Versailles to negotiate an unlikely alliance. The relationship between France and Persia illuminates how the French perceived a foreign nation and themselves.[8] A national history with global dimensions offers an alternative vantage point from which to survey interactions between East and West as well as Bourbon France itself.[9]

## Early Modern Representations of the East

Scholars have long tried to understand how western European countries formed ideas about a foreign country or the exotic.[10] Most influential has been Edward Said's idea of Orientalism, which, broadly speaking, examines how Western countries have constructed a distorted image of the Orient, often bound up with colonial domination. For the early modern period, it has become clear that while some facets of Said's theory of Orientalism hold true, many do not. In the seventeenth century, the French constructed a Persia largely based on their image of France itself. To the extent that their knowledge of Persia was distorted and self-referential, it confirms Said's theory. Yet representations of the Orient in the early modern period are not necessarily tied to imperial projects.[11]

In early modern French relations with Persia, the power/knowledge dynamic is at play, but power is directed toward domestic statecraft. Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's chief minister, collected information on Persia for the royal library as part of his program to build the French state.[12] He sponsored the travels of young scholars to learn Persian, including François Pétis de la Croix, who became an eminent interpreter of Persian, translated diplomatic documents and numerous manuscripts, and wrote the popular *One Thousand and One Days*.

Studies of economics, military technology, and culture have changed our assumptions about the perceived superiority of Europeans over Asians in the early modern period. For European states such as France, military subjugation of Asians was in most cases beyond reach. Louis XIV regarded Persia as a worthy competitor, especially when it came to monarchical splendor. Seventeenth-century French state servants and scholars often compared Bourbon France to Safavid Persia, and they found as much to admire as to

denigrate. Whereas some modern scholars see the study of the exotic as solely negative, a means of marginalizing the "other," seventeenth-century French writers used the exotic to connect themselves to Persians. Frenchmen saw in Persia a version of themselves that revealed their own strengths and weaknesses.

European representations of the Orient can be understood through texts, diplomatic encounters, and material culture. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Nicolas Dew, Michele Longino, Madeleine Dobie, Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Nabil Matar, and Faith Beasley are only a handful of scholars among many who have uncovered novel approaches to exchanges between Europe and the East.[13] The case study in this book shows how Frenchmen created an image of Persia that evolved over the course of the seventeenth century. Ideas of the Orient emerged to match French interests, tastes, and politics, and had an impact on French identity.

Foremost, the connections between France and Persia question the way the Orient in the early modern period has been treated as a monolithic entity. The focus on Persia in seventeenth-century France seeks to tease out differences between Asian countries in European representations. Scholars have recently shown the complexity of representations of the Orient during the early modern period.[14] Yet most studies on early modern French contacts with the East continue to conflate Asian countries—for instance, the Ottoman Empire and Persia.[15] The Franco-Persian case uncovers different possible layers of meaning in literature, art, diplomatic exchanges, and material culture through which the French formed a particular vision of Persia that clearly distinguished it from other countries in Asia.

On the flip side, the French association with Persia counters the view of a monolithic Occident. The seventeenth-century French image of Persia developed in tandem with changes in politics, society, and even material culture peculiar to France. French ties to Persia could not have been reproduced by another European country.[16]

## The Mirror

Designating Persia as an "other" does not convey the complexities of the image of Persia for the French. Instead, the mirror, defined as a model of comparison that connected foreign places, is a metaphor that better conveys the nuances of the relationship. As the case of Persia shows, Asian countries invited an intricate set of comparisons in early modern Europe that could present different mirrors, sometimes positive and at other times negative, both real and imaginary for their individual viewers.

The Persian mirror was not static but changed over time. It also did not necessarily reflect the same image for all Frenchmen.[17] Furthermore, it was a distorting mirror, offering a reflection of Persia that varied based on the identity of the viewer, the viewer's use of it, and the circumstances of the particular moment. For instance, Jean Chardin, the French Huguenot traveler, and the Baron de Breteuil, a courtier who served as the *introducteur des ambassadeurs* for the Persian ambassador in 1715, shared certain notions that Persia was similar to France in monarchy, politesse, and luxury; at the same time, the two men recognized that Persia was different from France socially, religiously, and politically. These similarities and differences could be positive or negative—for example, the notion of luxury was both a source of French pride and a target for criticism.

And while Chardin used knowledge of Persia to criticize French politics and customs, Breteuil wielded his information to defend court protocol and prestige against the demands of the Persian ambassador. French individuals, in other words, developed different representations of Persia based on their personal or professional experience.

In the seventeenth century, the French sometimes compared themselves to another Middle Eastern power: the Ottoman Empire. Yet Persia served a different function in the French imagination than the Ottomans did. Frenchmen interacted more frequently and therefore were more familiar with the Ottoman Empire than with the more distant Persian Safavid Empire. Since the sixteenth century, the French monarchy had diplomatic ties and shared an intermittent alliance with the Ottomans against their mutual enemy the Hapsburgs.[18] The French knew comparatively little about Persia and could envision the world they wanted. The remoteness of the relationship between the French and the Safavids allowed for fabrication, exaggeration, and an imagined sense of kinship, and it suggests the possibility of a different kind of relationship between Asian and European countries.

As noted, the French of the seventeenth century invented a Persia that corresponded to their own political and cultural circumstances. Persia thus provided a foil by which the French could both criticize their own monarchy and define French identity. Discussions of Persia especially mirrored debates over French luxury and despotism. French writers used the relationship with Persia, like the relationship with the Ottoman Empire, to criticize facets of French society. However, the French also saw Persia as a country that, like France, was a center of culture, civility, and sophistication. Just as in France, the Persian court was a place of refined manners and practices. The Persian mirror reflected the savoir vivre of the French court, a special kinship that is not present in the Turkish case.

For seventeenth-century Frenchmen, images of Persia abounded with similarities to France. And while, as we have seen, many of these similarities were imagined in the service of various aims, actual parallels did exist. For example, when in 1708 Pierre-Victor Michel, a French diplomat, visited the Persian court, he admired the Safavid dynasty's mirrored hall and the shah's glittering diamond-studded suit. Seven years later, Louis XIV, wearing his own spectacular suit embedded with diamonds, greeted Mohammad Reza Beg, the visiting Persian ambassador, in his own Hall of Mirrors. And both the Safavid and Bourbon monarchs expressed their power and favors through rituals, ceremonies, and proximity to the king.[19] This shared love of monarchical pomp and precedence especially shone during diplomatic meetings between France and Persia. French courtiers and ambassadors were quick to draw upon this similarity during negotiations and used it to shape their relationship to Persia.

Physical diplomatic contacts made similarities and differences between France and Persia particularly apparent. Art historians have emphasized the importance of the study of works of art and artifacts involved in diplomatic contacts.[20] Embassies resulted not just in writings on Persia but also in illustrated prints and consumer goods, which deserve more scholarly attention to understand their effect on the conception of the exotic.[21] This volume's analysis of the material culture surrounding the 1715 visit of Mohammad Reza Beg to Louis XIV's court illustrates the tensions inherent in defining the exotic. Frenchmen's decisions about what was "Persian," or foreign, and what was "French" were affected by shifts in politics and also by shifts in the public's tastes and interests over the course of the seventeenth century. The analysis of prints depicting

Mohammad Reza Beg shows how artists styled him as exotic but, at the same time, familiarized him as French through his clothing and material goods. The images of Mohammad Reza Beg blurred the lines between what was considered Persian and what was considered French.

In the end, diplomacy between France and Persia had little political and economic impact, and treaties between the two countries were never seriously followed up by Louis XIV or the Safavids. Nevertheless, diplomacy did have lasting effects on French notions of Persia and on French identity. Diplomatic contacts reveal how the French both distinguished themselves from a far-off place and linked themselves to that place.[22] Particular diplomatic contexts shaped different versions of Persia for Frenchmen. Examinations of embassies between France and Persia reveal that diplomatic actors tried to overcome barriers and find commonalities that not only facilitated negotiation but also shaped French understanding of Persia and, above all, itself. Even if the result of embassies was not always political success, diplomatic encounters provided watershed moments in the evolution of French identity.

* * *

The seventeenth-century relationship between France and Persia, told here, begins with descriptions of the Safavid Empire by missionaries who imagined that Shiite Persians were ripe for conversion to Christianity. Later, in the 1660s, Louis XIV's finance minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, encouraged the study of Oriental languages, including Persian, and the translation of Oriental texts. A group of translators and scholars devoted to studying Persia came into existence in the course of the seventeenth century thanks to the patronage of the state. Some of these writers, such as Jean Chardin, drew affinities between France and Persia that fed a comparison of the two far-flung countries. For Chardin, the Persian court provided an instructional mirror for French elites.

French-language versions of Persian texts also reveal how France reinvented Persia to suit its own notions. Although labeled "translations," seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French Oriental texts were often loose adaptations, with many invented French elements or, in some cases complete fabrications. Du Ryer's "translation" of the Persian classic *The Rose Garden* suggested to French readers that Persia, like France, stood out in civility and courteous behavior. Another example is Pétis de la Croix's "translation" of the *One Thousand and One Days*. This book of fairy tales set in Persia claimed to be based on a Persian text, but in fact it was Pétis's own creation, a French work more than an Oriental one. The stories presented a magical picture of Persia, an image that was sustained well into the eighteenth century by the popularity of the fairy tale in French elite circles. And in the visual arts, Charles Le Brun's painting of Persian queens at Alexander's feet invoked Persia in an allegory that highlighted the ideal princely virtues that Louis XIV wished to project.

France's connection to Persia developed through diplomacy as well as through literature and painting. The descriptions of the French embassy to Persia in 1705 reveal the challenges that the ambassador Pierre-Victor Michel faced in navigating Persian political factions and in dealing with a French rival, a woman named Marie Petit. Michel's memoirs outline his efforts to find common ground between France and Persia that might serve as the basis of a treaty concerning commercial and religious affairs.

Michel's experience as a French diplomat in Persia can be examined in conjunction with the numerous examples of foreign diplomats in France, especially that of the Persian ambassador to France. The diplomatic visits from Ottoman, Muscovite, Siamese, and Moroccan ambassadors were handled differently than the more frequent diplomatic visits from European ambassadors. The visits of the Asian representatives produced many ceremonial difficulties but also generated tremendous curiosity in Asia, which Louis XIV used to his advantage. The crown took special care to turn the audiences with those ambassadors into spectacular events to promote the Bourbon monarchy.

The last magnificent display of Louis XIV's reign, the visit of Mohammad Reza Beg in 1715, deserves special attention. Information concerning this event is abundant and can be found in prints, administrative documents, journal descriptions, and eyewitness testimony by, among others, the Duc de Saint-Simon, the famed courtier-memoirist. The most insightful source is the firsthand, behind-the-scenes account of this visit in the multivolume memoirs of Louis XIV's *introducteur des ambassadors*, the Baron de Breteuil. Surprisingly, Breteuil was a culturally sensitive host. He prepared for the visit by contacting French scholars of Persia and reading travel literature. While this knowledge proved useful, it was not enough to manage the proud Persian, who upset French protocol and proved a demanding guest. Breteuil's attempts to deal with the "culture clash" generated by the visit shows that conflict, in the end, arose out of conceptions in common between France and Persia.

The Beg's visit left an abundant visual record. A host of engravings were struck at the time, proof that Parisians were curious about the visitor and eager to purchase prints of foreigners. The images emphasized the exotic and depicted the Beg as a curiosity. Yet at the same time the prints tempered his foreign qualities to make him recognizable and accessible to the French people. In the prints, the Beg also functioned as a symbol of Louis XIV's power. The analysis of the images and material culture surrounding the Beg's visit reveals the complex relationship between the exotic, French identity, and royal propaganda.

In the aftermath of the visit and the death of Louis XIV, Persia and the Beg took on new meaning under the succeeding French government. During the regency of Louis XV, comparisons between the French crown and Persia often highlighted the injustices of the monarchy, which were increasingly coming under attack in France. Fictional texts such as *Amanzolide* used the tale of Persia to discuss the tensions between civility and despotism in France.

News of the sudden fall of the Safavid Empire altered the Persian mirror. With the collapse, positive associations became harder to draw, and Persia could no longer serve as a flattering comparison to the French monarchy. Descriptions of the horrific siege of Isfahan in 1722 and the loss of power of the Safavid dynasty shocked Enlightenment authors such as Montesquieu and Voltaire, who grappled to explain the demise of a civilized, polite, luxurious empire akin to France and to consider the implications for France itself. In the wake of Persia's collapse, the Persian mirror, once used to represent the brilliance of the Sun King's France, more than ever highlighted the growing criticism of Bourbon rule.

1

# Missionaries, Travelers, and the Case of Jean Chardin

France's relationship to Persia can only be understood in the context of its ties to Persia's rival, the Ottoman Empire. Official French foreign policy sought to counteract the power of the Hapsburgs and their allies.[1] Since the Ottomans posed a threat to the Hapsburgs, the French sought an alliance with the Turkish power, while other European powers, such as Venice and the Hapsburg Empire, looked for allies against the Ottomans.[2] While most of Catholic Europe looked for an opportunity to ally with Safavid Persia against the Ottomans, the French crown took little interest in Persia and remained loyal to the idea of an alliance with the sultan from the reign of Francis I through that of Louis XV.[3] However, the *dévots*, French devout Catholics who were a marginalized group within France, objected to the politics of the French state and pushed for a pro-Catholic foreign policy that would ally with fellow Catholics, such as the Hapsburgs, and look to Persia for support against the Ottomans.[4] This tension between the official policies of the French state and the campaign for anti-Turkish diplomacy by the *dévots* made France unique in its view of the Ottoman enemy, Persia.

Through the efforts of the Catholic parties, Frenchmen absorbed literature that portrayed Persia as tolerant toward Christians and even imagined the conversion of the Safavid Empire and its shah to Christianity. As contacts between France and Persia increased during the seventeenth century, missionaries and travelers began to compare and even liken Persia to France. Jean Chardin, the French merchant-traveler and authority on Persia, especially connected Persia to France, launching the Safavid Empire as a model for comparison for the Bourbon state.

## Missionaries and Persia

Some of the first influential European contacts with Persia came through Catholic missionaries in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the Catholic imagination, Persia became a suitable ally for Christian states against the Ottomans. Catholics painted Persia as open to Christianity because it was an enemy of the Turks. Persians appeared more likely to move away from Islam and embrace Christianity due to their profession of Shiism and break from Sunnism. The Portuguese, who were the first to establish official missionaries and contacts in Persia, promoted this image. As early as

1509, the Portuguese governor in India, Afonso de Albuquerque, dreamed of an alliance with the Persian shah through which the Arab world would be divided between the Persians and Christian princes and Jerusalem would be free from Ottoman control.[5]

By the end of the fifteenth century, travelers distinguished between the Ottomans and Persians and intimated opportunities for Europeans in Persia.[6] By the early sixteenth century, news of the establishment of a new Persian dynasty, the Safavids, opened European eyes to the possibility of an alliance with Persia. The charismatic leader of the Shiite Sufis, Ismail, from Ardabil in Azerbaijan, won the support of Turkish tribes and soon conquered all of the Persian Plateau. Ismail became the first shah of the Safavid Empire (1501–24), named after Sheikh Safi, an ancestor of Ismail and the founder of the Safaviyeh order.[7] Conflicts with Persia's Sunni neighbors, the Ottomans, ensued. Rumors in Europe even spread that Shah Ismail was in fact a Christian and that the Spanish Franciscans in the Holy Land had baptized him.[8]

The reign of Shah Abbas, ruler of the Safavid Empire from 1587 to 1629, opened doors to Europeans in Persia and further cultivated the image of Persia as a potential ally. He pursued a policy of religious tolerance to foster a diplomatic relationship with Christian Europe. The shah planned to strengthen the Persian Empire against Ottoman and Uzbek attacks and improve it economically through trade. The vast Ottoman Empire separated Europe from Persia and had left the Safavid Empire isolated from contacts with the West through the sixteenth century. Shah Abbas encouraged Christians to come to his recently constructed capital city, Isfahan, by allowing them to practice their faith and establish places of worship.[9] The Augustinians, Dominicans, Carmelites, and Capuchins took advantage of the shah's open attitude and established churches in the Persian capital in the early seventeenth century. The Jesuits were the last Catholic group to arrive in Isfahan, in 1653.[10]

The Portuguese established the first missions under Shah Abbas. In 1602, they sent three Augustinian missionaries, António de Gouveia, Jerónimo da Cruz, and Cristofero do Spirito Santo, to Isfahan. The shah gave them permission to construct a church and a convent. In turn, Abbas used his Portuguese visitors to establish European diplomatic contacts.[11] In 1609, he sent António de Gouveia to the court of Philip III of Spain and to Pope Paul V in Rome to promote trade between the Safavid Empire and the joint crown of Spain and Portugal; thereby, de Gouveia became the first official European diplomat in Persia. However, his mission failed due to attacks on the Portuguese ports in Hormuz and Bahrain. The shah sought his arrest, and de Gouveia had to return to Europe. Shah Abbas requested a new diplomatic representative from the Portuguese, and they sent Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa, whose endeavors at the Persian court also failed.[12]

At the same time, the pope made his bid for a coalition against the Turks and an alliance with Persia. The papacy hoped to return Ottoman lands to Christianity and unite the Christian churches there under the guidance of the Roman Church. Further, the Church wished to convert Armenians, members of the Greek Orthodox Church, and other Christian groups to Roman Catholicism, and they also hoped to convert Muslims. However, it could only accomplish this with a defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which necessitated a strong ally in the Ottoman region. In 1592, Pope Clement VIII sent a letter to Shah Abbas requesting him to join a Christian league against the Ottoman Empire. Shah Abbas responded to Rome's invitation by sending ambassadors to negotiate an alliance against the Turks. He sent Sir Anthony Sherley, an Englishman, and

Hussain Ali Beg, a Persian, to Rome to obtain military aid for his battles against the Turks.[13] Abbas also desired European artillery to fight the Ottomans, who had superior technology.[14] The endeavors of Anthony Sherley and his brother Robert did not succeed in securing military aid for Persia but did foster closer relations between Persia and both Catholic and Protestant nations, including England.[15]

France's diplomatic ties to the Ottoman Empire meant it had little incentive to pursue a relationship with the enemy of their Turkish ally, Persia. As a result, France's interest in Persia was slower to develop than was the case with its European neighbors. While the Portuguese had regular contact with Persia through the sixteenth century, the English had unsuccessfully tried to set up a trade route to Persia through Russia.[16] France, however, did not establish formal contact with Persia until the establishment of the first French Capuchin mission in 1628.[17] The first informal contacts between France and Persia came through earlier Catholic missionaries, who desired to take advantage of Shah Abbas's open policy and establish missions in Isfahan. The *dévots*, who did not agree with French foreign policy, supported these missionaries. This extreme Catholic group pushed for anti-Protestant policies, closer relations with Catholic powers, and a relationship with the Persians against the Turks.[18]

The ultra-Catholics reached the height of their power during the French Wars of Religion of the sixteenth century. Under Henri IV, their position waned, although they remained a strong minority voice as the following century progressed.[19] They found royal protection under the two regencies of Marie de Medici and Anne of Austria but never managed to influence state foreign policy, which aimed at undermining France's primary political opponent, the Hapsburg Empire.[20] Although the missionaries and the *dévots* during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries advocated for a Persian alliance, they were swimming against the political tide. France's foreign policy objective since Francis I in the sixteenth century had been to gain ascendancy over the Hapsburgs. In the early seventeenth century under Louis XIII and his first minister, Cardinal Richelieu, it became clear that religion would play a role only in domestic policies, as the crown sought to remove Protestant strongholds within France that threatened the power of the crown.[21] This definitively ended the dream of the *dévots* for a pro-Catholic foreign policy.[22]

However, from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, when the *dévots* were still at the height of their power, they were receptive to literature from Catholic states, such as Rome and Portugal, that spread the image of Persia as an ally of Christianity and called for an alliance with Persia against the Ottoman Empire. One example is the work of António de Gouveia, who promoted the Catholic missionary movement in Persia and spread knowledge of Shah Abbas's court through his writings. Translated into French in 1609, his work *Histoire orientale des grans procès de l'église catholique . . .* brought the successful missionary work of the Augustinians to the attention of the French Catholics.[23] In his text, de Gouveia encouraged the view of Shah Abbas as friendly to Christianity and even repeated the rumor that the shah had been baptized.[24]

News about Persia also spread through pamphlets that carried a Catholic, anti-Turkish, pro-Persian message advocating an allegiance with Persia in a crusading spirit against the Ottomans.[25] Although some of these pamphlets were originally written in French, many take ideas from, or are translations of, earlier missionary writings from

Rome and Portugal, as well as English texts that pointed to Shah Abbas's embrace of Christianity to promote trade relations.[26] The French pamphlets show that Europeans interpreted Shah Abbas's overtures to Christian Europe as an actual conversion opportunity, and they deemed Persia a suitable partner for missionaries and merchants.[27] And while the shah's overtures became meshed with the religious divisions within Europe—Europeans could interpret the open attitude of the shah toward Christianity as a partiality for either Protestantism or Catholicism, depending on the context—the French pamphlets, most of which are by unknown authors, reveal the French ultra-Catholic party's embrace of the image of Persian Shiites as an ally against the Ottomans. They unequivocally contain ideas professed by French missionaries and the powerful *dévot* party and can be viewed as propaganda to critique the French state's foreign and domestic policies. Because the leaflets send the same message, this chapter will focus on five examples to avoid repetition.[28]

An anonymous leaflet printed in Paris, titled *La Grande Defaite des Turcs par Saich Ismaël Sophi Roy de Perse, l'an 1580. Et la cause de la haine, & guerres d'entre ces deux grands Monarques* (The grand defeat of the Turks by Shah Ismail, king of Persia, in the year 1580 and the cause of hatred and war between these two great monarchies), parallels the sentiments of the French missionaries and the *dévots* at the time, who sympathized with Persia against the Ottomans; therefore, the authorship of this pamphlet can be traced to this extreme Catholic party. The pamphlet, however, shows that the French ultra-Catholics viewed the wars between the Turks and the Persians through the lens of their own religious struggles. It begins with a description of the cause of the wars between the two Muslim empires, noting, "This almost immortal war that is going on between the Turks and the Persians . . . is rooted in the diversity of opinion of the interpreters of the Koran and its ill-fated law."[29] It recognizes that the Turks view the Persians as heretics: "The Turks believe that they follow the true religion and the Persians (regarded as heretics by the others) claim to have the true intelligence of the will of Mohammad their false prophet."[30] This French reading of the religious conflicts mirrors the situation in France between the Protestants and the Catholics: the Persians resemble the Protestants in that they are viewed as heretics who broke away from Ottoman Islam.[31] While the Persians' role as heretics (akin to that of the Protestants) may initially seem an obstacle to an alliance with the Catholics, it was this very role that positioned them as possible allies.

According to the pamphlets, the idea of an alliance with Persia seemed impossible while the French nobility was embroiled in its own religious civil war. One pamphlet from 1586 is titled *Discours, De la bataille Nouvellement Perdue par le Turc, Contre le Roy de Perse: Ou il y a une remonstrance, à la Noblesse de la Chrestienté, & principalement a celle de France, pour l'inciter, de laisser leur guerre civile, affin de liuvrer au Turc ennemy Capital des Chrestiens* (Discourse of the battle recently lost by the Turk against the king of Persia: where there is a remonstrance to the Christian nobility, and principally to those of France, to incite them to end their civil war in order to deliver the capital of the Christians from the Turkish enemy).[32] This pamphlet is dedicated to Henri de Lorraine, the Duc de Guise and leader of the French Catholic League, who fought to prevent the Protestant heir to the throne, Henry of Navarre, from becoming king.[33] The leaflet calls upon the French nobility to stop fighting one another, end their civil war, and unite against the Turks to free Jerusalem.[34] The pamphlet makes a plea to the French to seize

the opportunity presented by the military strength of Persia and its wars against the Ottomans. The leaflet notes that the Persians "defeated a great number of the Turkish army" in the last battle fought, advertising the strength of Persia as a potential ally.[35]

Another anonymous pamphlet found at the Bibliothèque Nationale, *La Nouvelle conversion du roy du Perse avec la defaite de deux cens mil Turcs après sa conversion* (The recent conversion of the king of Persia with the defeat of two hundred thousand Turks after his conversion), printed in Angers in 1606, relates the rise of the Safavid Empire and names its ancestral leaders who had diplomatic relations with Europe. It tells the story of Ismail, the first king of the Safavid Empire, and the rise of Shiism in Persia: "The first who made a change to the Coran was a certain Ismail, who came from the race of Uzun Hasan."[36] This refers to Ismail's Turkish ancestor Uzun Hasan, who had contact with Europeans in the fifteenth century. Uzun Hasan ruled the Aqquyunlu Empire, formed by Turkmen clans. During his rule, from 1453 to 1478, the Aqquyunlu and its allies sent a diplomatic mission to European courts for an alliance against the Ottoman sultan.[37] In 1463, Venice proposed an alliance with Uzun Hasan, who responded by sending an ambassador to Venice and to the Vatican to coordinate an attack on the Ottomans.[38]

This pamphlet also shows that the struggles between the French Catholics and the Protestants continued to color the ultra-Catholic party's interpretation of Ottoman Sunnism and Safavid Shiism into the seventeenth century.[39] "It was he [Ismail] himself who caused the revolt of the empire of Persians and who invaded it in approximately the year [1500] because he entered it deceitfully while pretending to announce and preach the law of Mohammad, saying that until now it has been misunderstood."[40] Ismail appears as a heretic who moved away from the mainstream Islam of the Ottomans, spreading a new religion; the analogy with the Protestants is clear.

The pamphlet notes that Ismail seized many areas of the Persian kingdom and convinced his subjects to take up this new religion, which he learned from a Turkish monk, reputed as a great prophet himself.[41] The pamphlet describes how Ismail made his subjects convert to his new branch of Islam through an edict, and also how he "acquired this great empire."[42] Further, he took the name of Sofi, a title his successors would hold, which signified an interpreter of God.[43] Finally, Ismail emblematized his new religion by the wearing of a red cap: "After, he took off the white turban . . . that the Turks wore, and made them wear a red turban that one could only wear in Turkey if one came from the race of Mohammad."[44]

The pamphlet further explains how Ismail's actions enraged the Ottomans: "This new change in religion engendered such a great hate among the infidels, that the Turks judged that God found it more gratifying when they exterminated one Persian than when they killed seventy Christians."[45] In the French accounts, the religious differences between the Ottomans and the Persians inspired great hatred and violence, paralleling contemporary French struggles over religion.

The French description of the Persians' allegiance to their faith, Shiism, also deserves examination. The Persians, who broke away from Sunni Islam, just as the Protestants split from Catholicism, are portrayed as wavering in their religion—and thus more likely to convert to Christianity than other Muslims. The pamphlet notes that Ismail was on the verge of rejecting Islam in favor of the Christian faith: "Ismael, or this new Sofi, was at this time on the brink of embracing the faith of our Good Lord Jesus Christ, and of destroying entirely the faith of the false prophet, if the emperor Maximilian, King Louis

XII, and the Venetians had wanted to enter into a league with him."[46] The pamphlet sends the message that the Christian princes missed their opportunity to convert the wavering ruler of Persia by not entering into an alliance with him at the right moment.

The pamphlet ends by suggesting that the contemporary king of Persia and successor to Ismail, Shah Abbas, desires to convert himself and his entire kingdom to Catholicism. In fact, the pamphlet fabricates the story that Abbas sent Pope Clement VIII an embassy in the year 1601 to "enter into a confederation against the Emperor of the Turks."[47] It also claims that Christianity "touched the heart of the Great Sofi to cause him to have himself baptized along with all his people."[48] The pamphlet fantasizes that the dream of converting Muslims was partially realized when Ismail decided that his entire kingdom should be baptized, and ousted all those who refused. The king of Persia, "his heart already touched and pushed by a secret goad from the heavens, commanded all his princes and officers to assemble."[49] He revealed his plan "to baptize them, telling them that in addition to the health of their souls, through this plan, they could ruin the empire of the Turks, their enemy, and join with the Christian princes."[50]

According to the leaflet, there was no objection to the Persian king's plan, since most of the princes "were already Christian in their souls and the others were afraid of displeasing their prince."[51] According to the anonymous author, Ismail and his people were baptized and the cross was placed in all his provinces, and the king "commanded all those who did not wish to be baptized to leave his empire."[52] This text conjures the fantasy of a Christian Persia. Above all, the pamphlet emphasizes that the Persians, now free from Ottoman Islam, are ready for Christianity, sending the message that conversion efforts in Persia are not in vain and missionaries should receive support.

Another anonymous leaflet further advertised the overtures made by Shah Abbas toward Christian princes. In *L'Entree Solemnelle Faicte a Rome Aux Ambassadeurs du Roy de Perse, le cinquiesme Auril, 1601. Envoyez à N. S. Pere le Pape pour contracter ligue contre le Turc, & moyenner le reduction de son Royaume à la Religion Catholique apostolique & Romaine* (The solemn entry in Rome for the ambassadors of the king of Persia, the 5th of April 1601. Sent to our Holy Father the pope to form a league against the Turk and to Roman Catholicize his realm), the shah makes promises to allow Catholics to practice in Persia and build churches if they will aid him in the war with the Turks.[53] In this account the shah appears open to Christianity, encouraging the prospect of his own conversion:

> In this court [Rome], there are two ambassadors of the King of Persia, who came to encourage the Christians to go to war advisedly with the Turks, promised to contribute an army of one hundred fifty thousand horses and sixty thousand foot soldiers, and wished that we promise him not to make any peace treaty with the Turks. . . . He offers as well free commerce to Christians in his kingdoms and permission to build churches and convents and to exercise their religion freely, giving good hope to the prospect of joining the union of the Catholic faith.[54]

Thirty years later, another pamphlet, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé entre les armees du grand Seigneur & du Roy du Perse . . .* (A relation of what transpired between the armies of the Grand Seigneur [Ottoman sultan] and the king of Persia . . .) from 1631 shows that

Persia still interested the *dévots* despite their failure to effectively influence French state foreign policy. The pamphlet reveals a new dimension to the argument for a coalition with Persia: the French actually equate Persia with France and called it "this warrior nation that largely matches our own."[55]

The call for a Christian-Persian coalition against the Turks continued through the seventeenth century. In France, the Capuchins, a Franciscan order founded in 1525, pushed for a pro-Catholic alliance with Spain and Persia against the Ottoman Empire. Joseph le Clerc du Tremblay, ordained as Father Joseph in 1604, was a Capuchin, an advocate of the *dévot* party, and one of Cardinal Richelieu's advisors. He fostered the French interest in the East and pushed for a Christian crusade against the Turks, led by Charles de Gonzague, Duc de Nevers, who held a claim to the throne of Constantinople.[56]

Father Joseph, echoing the pamphlets from the end of the sixteenth century, believed that the continued war between the Turks and the Persians created the possibility of victory over the Turks, as it made an encirclement of the Ottoman Empire by its enemies feasible. He focused on the domestic problems facing the Turks, such as their military losses to the Persians and their internal problems.[57] He wrote, "The military discipline and force of the land armies is greatly weakened . . . the finances of the Turks are in disorder from negligence, luxury, from voluptuous lifestyles and principally by the long domestic wars and foreign wars with Persia."[58] Father Joseph noted that the despotism of the Turks would eventually cause mass uprisings among suppressed Christians and even the Turks' own soldiers.[59]

As France did not favor a crusade against the Turks, Father Joseph tried to convince Philip III of Spain, Pope Paul V, and the Italian princes to support the alliance with Persia proposed by Shah Abbas. Further, he encouraged a response to Shah Abbas's appeals for European military aid and a pact against the Turks. Father Joseph writes that the king of Persia "solicited the Pope, the Emperor, and the King of Spain to attack . . . the Turks for whom he promises ruin out of the great fear he has that the Turks will be the cause of his own [ruin] considering the intensity of their rivalry."[60] Father Joseph explains that if the Christians agree to an alliance, then the Persian shah will grant freedom to Christians to practice their religion. Further, if the Persians and Christians are victorious over the Turks, he agrees he will give the Christians Palestine and Jerusalem. However, despite Father Joseph's efforts, a formal alliance with Persia never materialized.

When the Thirty Years' War broke out and France, under Richelieu, decided to officially foster an alliance with the Turks, Father Joseph's diplomatic efforts came to an end. He decided to replace the idea of military intervention against the Ottomans with a missionary movement to both Persia and the Ottoman Empire. He believed that sending missionaries to the Persian and Ottoman empires would cause both to convert.[61] He assumed that because the Ottoman Empire was degenerating, despotic, and an infidel state, it would eventually collapse, and the missions would attract Ottoman subjects through Christian good works and example.[62] Father Joseph believed that the Capuchin order would impress Muslims with its extreme piety and austerity. The order was also committed to act without aggression toward Islam.[63] Father Joseph succeeded in establishing a Capuchin convent in Istanbul where Christians could attend school.[64]

Although an alliance with Persia proved impossible, especially in light of Richelieu's reaffirmed anti-Hapsburg foreign policy, conversion was still thought to be feasible. The French missionaries continued their efforts to convert Muslim Persians and win over

Armenians and other Christian residents in Persia. The Capuchin efforts opened the door to renewed diplomatic contact between the French state and Persia and, most importantly, led to increased writings and knowledge about Persia in the French language. In the early years of the seventeenth century, only Frenchmen proficient in other languages had been able to read about Persia. Some examples of available texts were Don Juan of Persia's account (1604) and Pedro Teixeira's work (1610), which existed only in Spanish, and Sir Anthony Sherley's description of his embassy to Shah Abbas in 1598, which could be read in English in William Parry's *New and Large Discourse on the Travels of Sir Anthony Sherley, by Sea and over Land to the Persian Empire* (1601).[65]

The first major French text appeared through Capuchin efforts in Persia. In 1622, Father Pacifique de Provins was sent to Persia by the French state to pick the ideal spots for Capuchin missions in the Levant.[66] He established a mission in Isfahan in 1628. However, the shah immediately sent him on a diplomatic mission to Louis XIII with a letter proposing an alliance against the Turks.[67] Although nothing resulted from it, the shah's proposal pleased the *dévots*, who continued to support a change in France's traditional alliance with the Turks.[68] Pacifique de Provins's voyage resulted in his *Relation du Voyage en Perse*; published in 1631, it became the first major French work on the Safavid Empire.[69]

The Capuchins also fostered French influence in Isfahan and the Persian court. When Pacifique left Isfahan for his diplomatic job on behalf of the shah to Louis XIII, he left Father Gabriel de Paris in charge of the mission; Father Gabriel led the order in the capital until 1636. Father Gabriel became proficient in Persian and wrote tracts in that language to promote Catholicism.[70] Father Raphael du Mans, who took charge of the mission from 1649 until his death in 1696, lived in Isfahan for fifty years and served as an interpreter for three shahs, Abbas II, Suleiman I, and Husayn I.[71] Raphael du Mans became an important personality in the history of Persian and French contacts, as he encountered almost all the European travelers who passed through Isfahan. He wrote an untitled manuscript on Persia that was never published and does not seem to have been destined for publication, but remained in the library of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's minister of finance. Perhaps Father Raphael intended this manuscript to serve as a report on Persia for Colbert.[72]

In 1631, the same year as the first publication of Father Pacifique's work on Persia, a French translation of Pietro della Valle's *Histoire apologétique d'Abbas roi de Perse . . .* appeared and found an audience in France with critics of that country's pro-Ottoman policy. Della Valle left Italy for the Orient in an effort to obtain Oriental manuscripts to benefit Western science and provide support for Catholicism.[73] He spent a considerable time in the Ottoman Empire, where he studied Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. After two years in the Ottoman lands, his attitude toward the Turks remained cynical: he still considered them infidels and barbarians and blamed them for mistreating local Christians.[74] He also held little esteem for the impoverished lifestyle of Arab peoples.[75]

The news of Shah Abbas's efforts to join forces with Western powers against the Turks struck a chord with della Valle, and he decided to leave the Ottoman Empire for Persia and offer the Safavid ruler his help in his wars against the Ottomans. Although Shah Abbas was an infidel himself, his efforts against the Turks and his tolerance towards Christianity ranked high in della Valle's opinion. He pledged to fight for Shah Abbas against the infidel Ottomans.[76] He concurred with the Catholic literature that aspired

to free the Holy Land from Ottoman hands: a victory for Shah Abbas with Christian help meant liberation for Jerusalem. Further, he hoped that local Christians could find protection from Ottoman oppression under the more tolerant Shah Abbas.[77] Finally, the image of Shah Abbas impressed della Valle and drew him to his court.[78]

Pietro della Valle arrived in Isfahan in 1617, and in his letters to his friend Mario Schipano in Naples, he conveyed a positive first impression about the Safavid capital in comparison to the Ottoman lands.[79] He enjoyed the court festivities and became acquainted with Shah Abbas by conversing intimately with him. He described the king's charismatic personality, intelligence, and penchant for fun and cheerfulness.[80] However, his approval of the Persians and their king changed to disappointment as time passed, as can be seen in the disparaging remarks in his later letters. For example, he realized that the king did not share his interests in history or other fields prized in Italy.[81] Further, Abbas's campaign against the Christians in Georgia disturbed della Valle and damaged the shah's image as a tolerant ruler.[82] The Safavid court, founded on the military might of the Turkish Qizilbash (the Turkish nomadic followers of the early Safavids), did not offer much intellectual stimulation.[83]

Della Valle's unfavorable view of Persia softened once he left the court. Away from the court, he frequented intellectual Persian circles interested in astronomy, mathematics, and theology. He began to appreciate Persian poetry, debate Islam, and learn about local heretical sects.[84] When Pietro della Valle returned to Italy in 1628, he wrote a tract praising Abbas, rescinding his earlier harsh description of the ruler. Della Valle's *Histoire Apologétique d'Abbas, Roy de Perse; En la personne duquel sont representées plusieurs belles qualitez d'un Prince heroique, d'un excellent courtesan . . .* (History of the king of Persia; in whose person are represented many good qualities of a heroic prince, an excellent courtier . . .), published in 1631, offered the French a favorable image of Shah Abbas as a courtier and leader.[85]

## Jean Chardin and the Persian Court

The Catholic drive to convert Persians, along with Shah Abbas's diplomatic advances, brought Persia to French attention. Once French missionaries established churches in the Safavid Empire, France had to ensure their protection, opening the door for increased political and commercial encounters with Persia. Spreading Christianity was not the sole motivation for travels to Persia. In fact, competition for commercial interests prompted European states to encourage such travels. The Portuguese, English, and Dutch negotiated with Shah Abbas for trade concessions.[86] In France, Richelieu realized the importance of trade with the East to the country's wealth, but his attempts at establishing trading networks failed.[87]

The French crown finally began investing in French contacts with Persia when Jean-Baptiste Colbert established the Compagnie des Indes Orientales and Compagnie du Levant in 1664. Colbert's initiative encouraged travels to Persia and prompted the publication of a wave of texts.[88] Two Huguenot merchants, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and Jean Chardin, traveled to Persia on their own accord and produced the two most famous French travel works on the Safavid Empire. Both authors brought a vast amount of information on Persia to French readers.[89] One of Tavernier's companions, André Daulier

Deslandes, wrote his own account that included maps and distances to help the reader follow his itinerary.[90] Another travel work appeared in 1653 by François La Boullaye-le Gouz, whom Colbert selected to represent Louis XIV in Persia to negotiate French trade privileges.[91]

In addition to commerce, Colbert also planned to add Oriental manuscripts to the royal library. In 1665, Louis XIV named Colbert *surintendant général des bâtiments du roi*, a post that oversaw patronage of the arts and sciences.[92] The French state's support for intellectual endeavors played into the royal propaganda plan by demonstrating French cultural supremacy.[93] The accumulation of a precious collection of Oriental texts for the royal library, the Bibliothèque du Roi, exhibited Louis XIV's cultural patronage and French intellectual achievement. Moreover, Colbert's library projects were part of a larger process of knowledge collection that served to strengthen the state.[94]

Through the collection of texts, Colbert fostered French interest in Oriental learning. He funded missions to the East to gather manuscripts and also sponsored the study of these Oriental documents once they became part of the royal library collection.[95] Some scholars, however, pursued their scientific interests without state support. Jean de Thévenot, who produced another classic travelogue on Persia, is one such example of a traveler who pursued his interests in science without the crown's sponsorship.[96]

By the mid-seventeenth century, Colbert's patronage led to an explosion of writings on Persia and the Orient. Travel literature became a popular genre meant to satisfy curiosity about the East. Travel works in other languages were also translated into French. For example, Abraham van Wicquefort translated Adam Olearius's and Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa's journals on Persia into French in the 1650s and 1660s.[97] French writers continued to define Persia according to political issues and present both negative and positive descriptions of it.[98]

The traveler Jean Chardin deserves special attention here. Not only have his works been praised by scholars as authoritative sources on Persia, but it is his writings that most clearly present Persia as comparable to France and as a device, or mirror, to reflect on French issues. Jean Chardin was born to a wealthy family of Huguenot jewelers. Information on his travels is scanty, but he seems to have first traveled to the East in 1664 or 1665 to deal jewels on behalf of the family business, and he ended up at the Persian court, where the shah named him a royal merchant. He returned to France in 1670, but increasing pressures on Huguenots in France caused him to go back to the East in 1671. He is then noted to have returned to Europe in 1680, spending time in London and making trips to Paris. In England in 1686, he published his ten-volume masterpiece: *Journal du voyage du chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes orientales* along with an English translation, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia*.[99]

Out of Chardin's many years in Persia, it is his experience as a witness to the coronation of Shah Suleiman I in 1666 that most concerns us here, as it resulted in the publication of *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (published in 1671 and translated into English in 1686 as *The Coronation of This Present King of Persia, Solyman the Third*), which announced Persia's likeness to France, both positively and negatively.[100] In the work, Chardin posits a brotherly connection between the shah of Persia and King Louis XIV and appraises the two empires alike as the greatest in the world. The Persians, he notes, treated Frenchmen foremost above all other Europeans during ambassadorial

receptions. For the diplomatic visit of Nicolas Claude Lalain, sent on behalf of Louis XIV in 1665, Chardin writes, "the respect that the Persians have for the first nation of the world, allowed them to have their audience first, & before all the other Europeans."[101] After Lalain made a speech before the shah, as Chardin records, the shah responded by reaffirming the brotherhood between the two monarchs: "The King answered to this speech from the mouth of his first minister in these terms: Monsieur Ambassador, you are welcome . . . the King of France is my brother, and the French nation is my host and my friend."[102]

Other French travelers also described the praise the shah bestowed on the Bourbon monarchy, and in turn the writers noted their respect for the Safavid monarchy. Father Pacifique de Provins, for example, mentioned the shah's opinion of the French king: "I know well, said the king Abbas, that he [the king of France] is the richest Emperor in the world."[103] André Daulier Deslandes, who had joined Tavernier's voyage and authored *Les Beautez de la Perse ou la description de ce qu'il y a de plus curieux dans ce royaume . . .*, reminded his readers that "Persia is at present one of the great empires of Asia and the world."[104] He further remarked that the Persian shah distinguished Frenchmen from all other Europeans: "The King decided to ask if we were true Frenchmen, or simply Franks, for, notwithstanding that they called all Europeans Franks, they knew well how to distinguish the French from others and treat them with more esteem."[105]

French travelers expected Persians to excel in pursuits practiced by Europeans. Pietro della Valle, for instance, anticipated that he would be able to learn and debate the humanities and sciences at court. Though he did not find intellectual patronage similar to what he experienced in European courts, he did discover shared academic interests outside the royal circle in other parts of Persia.[106]

Chardin celebrated Persian science and regarded it as a suitable standard by which one could assess French academics. He writes, "I don't think that there is any other country in our Europe where the sciences are more esteemed and more sought after than they are in Persia."[107] He describes how science is a part of life for the rich and poor: "In all sorts of conditions one sees most of the world indulge in it; and many peasants themselves go to read good books, and raise their children in the sciences, as much as the convenience of their condition allows, and for that purpose, they send them from the age of five and endeavor to bring them into these public colleges, where not only are the masters engaged to teach, but the pupils are still to learn, in order not to be hindered by poverty."[108] Chardin praises at length the Persian eagerness to learn, teach, and pursue the sciences for the joy of it.

By contrast, in France, elites controlled science through institutions such as the Royal Academy of Science, founded in 1666. Colbert established the Royal Academy in a larger effort to manage information in support of royal authority. Scientists received a state income, but in turn lost their independence and became subject to state rules that forbid political or religious statements.[109] Chardin's description of Persian academics could serve as a veiled criticism of French state control and restrictions on academic freedom. Seventeenth-century European thinkers, such as Descartes, Pascal, and Leibniz, to name a few, deemed science, including mathematics, a suitable way to cultivate reason and improve the strength of the mind for one of noble character.[110] Science was necessary for a virtuous life and cultivated the spirit of elite audiences. Whereas, in Persia all ranks of society, including the lower classes, benefitted from scientific study.

Chardin associates respect for academic pursuits with a cordial national temperament: "At last, as the dominant genius of the Persians lends them to letters and sciences, it is easy to imagine them gentle and sociable."[111] Several French travelers shared Chardin's positive assessment of Persian behavior and believed Persian culture to be close to the French notion of civility, meaning to behave and converse politely.[112] Pacifique de Provins noted that "the Persian court strongly resembles that of France and the nobles are very polite, in as much their civility as in their eloquence."[113]

Persian hospitality during diplomatic receptions particularly captivated French travelers. Tavernier, for example, wrote of a Persian reception that honored a Venetian ambassador in Isfahan and remarked: "The civility of the Persians is great."[114] He noted, "It is these types of people who do things in good order and with grace, and should be used by Christian Princes in their ambassadorial visits to the Levant, and particularly for those to Persia, where the minds are most refined and the most political of all of Asia."[115] Pacifique de Provins also complimented Persian cordiality in diplomatic affairs, noting that "foreigners are well received in this kingdom."[116]

While Chardin praised Persians as beacons of learning and civility, he did not just use positive descriptions of Persia to explore French issues, but also revealed negative aspects of Persia that spoke to French concerns at home. Several French travelers commented on the absolute nature of the Persian monarchy, reflecting an ambivalence about the French monarchy's own absolutist ambitions. Chardin, for instance, discussed at length the absolute authority of a Persian government that allowed for a peaceful transfer of power from Shah Abbas II to his son. He opens his discussion with astonishment at the skillfully hidden transfer of power between monarchs:

> To me, I found something so new in this incident that I thought it was a dream. That the death of such a powerful prince could be concealed for such a long period of time, and that it was not known until after his son ascended the throne . . . But it is a stroke of the wisdom of the Persians, which is not one to be commended. With this skill, the state changed masters without its form altered: and it suffered one of its most dangerous revolutions without perceiving it; so that no sign of consternation appeared in the whole town of Isfahan.[117]

Chardin continues: "It seems to me then, that Isfahan was a Republic of Plato raised above fortune and exempt from accidents which work on mortal things. Only our Europeans were alarmed at the news of this great change, and those who had houses in the city kept them closed for the first hours of the day."[118] Chardin mentions in particular the Dutch ambassador, M. Hubert de Lairesse, who had visited India and seen trouble occur during the transfer of power. Evidently he expected a less peaceful outcome and shared Chardin's surprise at the calm succession.

Chardin voiced strong concern over the notably quiet transfer of power from one king to another: "The calm was always very deep; of which one can bring two reasons: one, the wisdom of the great, who understood well to conceal the death of the late Monarch: the other, the absolute authority of the Kings of Persia, and the terrible power that superstition has over the people."[119] Chardin acknowledges that the Safavids' prudent course of action prevented rebellion after the shah's death. But he could not help attributing the peaceful transition of power to the people's fear of their

government: "It is not, in my opinion, that many of them did not have to do violence to conceal their displeasure for fear of offending the new King."[120]

Chardin's comments mirror French concerns about their own government. Certainly Frenchmen, following the ideas of Jean Bodin, appreciated the order brought by a strong monarchy. But in decrying the "terrible power" of absolutism that silenced the Persian people's true opinions, a power he declares to be "superstition," Chardin is criticizing the supernatural power that legitimized divine monarchy. Early in his reign, Louis XIV supported his divine right to rule through mythical and mystical allegories. For example, the young Louis performed the role of the Sun God in *Ballet royal de la nuit*, in which nobles danced their submission to the Rising Sun, the future king of France, who reestablished order.[121] Over the course of his reign a more rationalist approach would shift the king's propaganda away from ancient and mystical comparisons, instead emphasizing Louis's own personal achievements as Louis le Grand.[122] But Chardin's criticism of the supernatural authority of the shah reflects the ongoing debate in France over representation of the power of their own king. Perhaps it is deliberate that Chardin's mirror text opens with Louis XIV's emblem of the sun flanked by the Persian emblem of the sun behind the lion, both symbols of divine monarchy embodied in supernatural elements, such as the sun god (see Figure I.1).[123]

Chardin paints their former king, Shah Abbas II, as a model ruler: "They [the Persians] considered that Abbas II, of whose death they had learned about, had become very capable of governing; that he treated his peoples favorably; that he made himself feared abroad, and procured abundance and tranquility at home; that he loved justice, and took care that the officers did not abuse their authority and oppress the people."[124] Chardin had a good relationship with Shah Abbas II, who directly bought jewels from him, and perhaps this positively colored his view of the ruler, who later in his reign succumbed to chronic drinking and neglected affairs of state in favor of his preferred pastime, hunting. And under his rule Persia suffered military losses. In fact, while Shah Abbas II was favorably characterized by some, he was demonized by others as a tyrant, intolerant of other religions.[125] Nevertheless, whether Chardin's assessment is accurate or not, his laudatory description of Abbas II provides a model for kingship that serves as a contrast with his statement on Shah Abbas II's heir, Shah Suleiman, described as a flawed candidate for the crown.

According to Chardin, Persians had good reason to worry about Suleiman as king: "But that this young Prince, who ascended the throne, had never seen anything, and could not but be an apprentice, not only in the art of reigning but in the smallest of things: that thus the weakness of his age and his incapacity would be suffered for a long time, as they had experienced under his predecessors in similar circumstances."[126] The contrast between Shah Abbas II and his son presents a definition of kingship that instructs a king on how to rule, similar to the mirror-of-princes genre. Chardin's *Coronation of Soleiman* not only tells the story of the king's assumption of power but assesses the virtues and flaws of monarchy, providing an example for kings, especially Louis XIV, to whom the book is dedicated.

Since the Middle Ages in Europe, elites had been reading mirror-of-princes texts, which delivered advice and models of rulership to princes. These texts drew on mirror imagery as a process of self-examination and evolved over time to instruct groups other than the ruler himself, such as courtiers.[127] Mirror literature offered different sets of

advice for various audiences and could accommodate the visions of different authors.[128] Machiavelli, for example, is known to have embraced the camouflaged criticism inherent in the mirror writings—or, as other scholars argue, completely subverted the mirror-of-princes form with his critique.[129]

Chardin's *Coronation of Soleiman* borrows aspects of the mirror tradition by offering an instructive analysis of Persian rule and its effects on the country. Chardin provides stories from Suleiman's reign that projected vices and virtues common to a ruler.[130] The text offers not only a tutorial for the French monarch but also, at times, a veiled criticism of Louis XIV, his court, and French elites. Yet the novelty of Chardin's text lies in its use of a foreign land as a model. *The Coronation of Soleiman* reads like a travelogue, while also offering the reader a twist on the mirror genre.

Chardin warns France and the young Louis XIV of the dangers of absolutism. According to Chardin, no one in Persia dared express their worries about the new ruler, Shah Suleiman. Chardin laments, "At the simple command [of the kings], the most notable men come to offer their head and submit to their torture without daring to ask the reason why."[131] Chardin illustrates the point further with the story of the nazir (superintendant) who feared for his life because he had openly objected to Shah Suleiman and favored the shah's younger brother for kingship during the interregnum. However, the nazir cleverly pledged his submission to Shah Suleiman, and luckily for the nazir, the shah responded mercifully.[132]

Other travelers, such as André Daulier Deslandes, support Chardin's descriptions of a dangerous absolutist authority in Persia. Deslandes writes disapprovingly of the shah, "His power is so absolute, that the greatest lords let their heads be cut off at his slightest command."[133] After witnessing violence against a subject at one of the shah's events, Daulier Deslandes decries how the princes of Persia hold a man's life to be of little worth.[134]

Persia, according to travelers such as Chardin and Daulier Deslandes, served as a warning to absolutist governments such as that in France, where few courtiers dared to openly challenge Louis XIV and risk social and economic humiliation. At the end of Louis XIV's reign, critics of the crown abounded and those who had the courage to discuss the faults of France and the Sun King, including François Fénelon, the tutor to the king's grandson, the Duc de Bourgogne, suffered banishment.[135] Even the most famous proponent of absolute monarchy of the late sixteenth century, Jean Bodin, allowed for a check on the crown through the *parlements*, where judges held the power to register royal edicts and dispute them.[136] Louis XIV's government appeared more tyrannical over the years as he reduced the ability of the *parlementaires* to delay registering the king's laws as a form of opposition.[137] Enlightenment authors echoed concerns about the monarchy's reduction of checks on the ruler. For Montesquieu, the nobility, clergy, and judges served as intermediate powers in monarchy, distinguishing it from despotism. Henri Boulainvilliers, another critic of Louis XIV, argued in 1727 that France was ruined due to the decline of the nobility.[138]

According to Chardin, the shah's unchecked power led to vicious competition at court. Chardin describes the cruel tricks played at the Safavid court to oust rivals. He vividly tells the tale of the vizir of Mazandaran, who had insulted many at court during the reign of Shah Abbas II. During the royal succession of Suleiman, the commander of the musketeers, whom the vizir previously had called a coward and thief, decided

to avenge himself.[139] The new king had given the commander the task of sending out a royal garment to each of the courtiers to wear when they came to pay homage to the shah. In place of the royal garment, he sent a simple suit to the vizir. Fearing he would lose his reputation if he wore such a plain outfit, the vizir dressed himself in the magnificent outfit previously given to him by Abbas II. Meanwhile, the commander spread rumors that "the vizir was nothing but a dog and had contemptuously thrown to the ground the outfit the king had sent and would have nothing to do with the clothes of Shah [Suleiman]: so he took another one that Abbas, his [the Shah's] father, had given him."[140] Chardin proceeds to comment on the shah's naiveté concerning court society: "The king, who did not yet understand the cunning tricks of the court, took all this as right, and did not imagine that there was anything malicious in this plot."[141] The commander continued to turn the king against the vizir, which finally resulted in the confiscation of the vizir's property, brutal beating, and death.

Chardin's story told a horrific tale of a king who no longer controlled court society, causing the unjust death of a high-ranking official. The story resonates with French discussions concerning intrigue and competition for Louis XIV's favor. The French monarch carefully observed his courtiers, and rewarded and punished them as he saw fit. The Duc de Saint-Simon, a courtier and observer of life at Versailles, pronounced:

> He always took great pains to find out what was going on in public places, in society, in private houses, even family secrets, and maintained an immense number of spies and tale-bearers. These were of all sorts; some did not know that their reports were carried to him; others did know it; there were others, again, who used to write to him directly, through channels which he prescribed; others who were admitted by the backstairs and saw him in his private room. Many a man in all ranks of life was ruined by these methods, often very unjustly, without ever being able to discover the reason; and when the King had once taken a prejudice against a man, he hardly ever got over it.[142]

Chardin's story of the Persian vizir held a particular significance for Louis XIV, the ultimate arbiter of court conspiracies. Here again, Chardin provides a lesson for the French ruler by providing an example of incorrect rule and its consequences.

Conversely, regarding religious tolerance, Chardin holds up Persia as a beacon for Louis XIV to emulate. Descriptions of Persian lenience toward minority religions contrasts with French oppression of non-Catholics. Chardin indirectly criticizes the intolerance of Catholic France through his praise of the open-mindedness of all Muslims, but especially Persians. Generally, philosophical skepticism in Europe saw the rise of interest in Islamic thought.[143] Protestant writers, in particular, remarked on the tolerance of Islamic countries in order to condemn their persecution by Catholic states.[144] As previously noted, Chardin was Protestant himself; in his *Travels in Persia* he explains, "Upon my return to France [after some years in the East], I found that the religion in which I had been raised kept me away from all sorts of jobs, and that it was necessary to change, or to give up everything, everything called honor & advancement. One and the other seemed harsh: one is not free to believe what one wants."[145]

Despite Chardin's criticism of Catholic persecution, his account revealed the complexity of religious relations abroad, a complexity that belied the notion of a simple

Protestant/Catholic division upon which the ultra-Catholics had based their pamphlet propaganda. Despite his Huguenot political positions, Chardin praised the Catholic missionaries, who helped him navigate the dangerous roads to Persia, secured his goods, and introduced him to the Persian court. These missionaries came from Catholic orders that were at the heart of Huguenot persecution in Europe but, ironically, served as his ardent supporters in Persia.[146] Chardin shows the potential of cooperation between Protestants and Catholics free from state persecution. Yet Chardin's favorable picture of Catholics did not extend to all Christians. In the *Coronation*, he accused the Armenian Christians of crimes such as selling their children into slavery.[147]

In Chardin's descriptions, Persians appear more tolerant than their neighbors the Turks. Chardin's experience in the Ottoman Empire was tarnished by sour relations between France and Turkey at the time. In his *Travels*, Chardin describes in detail an argument that broke out between the French ambassador and the Ottoman vizir that threatened the status of Frenchmen in Ottoman lands.[148]

The negative reception Chardin received in the Ottoman lands most likely colored his unfavorable depiction of the Turks and his perception of the Persians as more tolerant. "The Turks," writes Chardin in the *Coronation*, "are enraged against us only because they are Mahometans . . . as they are never without war against the Christians it may be said that they also bring to the world all the spirit of barbarity and fury. But the Persians have no Christian power in their heads; for centuries they have not had any great war with the Christians; There is none in many of their achievements. Thus, they have not this excessive hate against us; and besides, as they have neither a great inclination nor a lot of habit of the war, their inclinations and their manners are more human and more reasonable."[149] Chardin characterizes the Persians as friendlier to Christianity and more rational than the Turks.

Chardin flatters Shah Abbas II as tolerant of other religions even though he considers him a more observant Muslim than most of his predecessors: "If Providence had elevated him to the throne, it was to live as king, and not to behave like a tyrant, so that he also owed justice to all his subjects, whatever religion they professed, since both were members of his estates."[150] Indeed, contemporary Europeans and subjects of the Safavid Empire alike depicted Shah Abbas II as tolerant, supporting Sufis and conducting open dialogues with Europeans. André Daulier Deslandes, for instance, also cited the religious tolerance in Persia, noting, "All the Franks or Europeans there have great freedom of religion and commerce."[151]

Yet Chardin's sketch of tolerance under Shah Abbas II—whom he saw as a model of toleration that Louis XIV, who persecuted not just Protestants but Jansenists, would do well to emulate—is not completely accurate, as his reign saw an increase in resentment against Sufis and non-Shiites, as well as pressure for Jews and Christians to convert. However, Rudi Matthee, historian of the Safavid Empire, argues that it was Abbas II's advisors, not the shah himself, who were to blame for the increase in persecution of minorities.[152]

Chardin compliments the Persians generally as less belligerent than their neighbors the Turks and Indians and as possessing more virtues: "The Persians have wit, vivacity, finesse, judgment, and prudence; without participating in any way in the brutal ferocity of the Turks, nor the gross ignorance of the Indians, between whom their country is situated; their morals are gentle and civil, and their minds have capacity and light."[153]

Chardin emphasizes Persia as a model of good judgment and downplays its aggression, a tone that resonates with French criticism of the wars during the first half Louis XIV's reign. The personification of refinement, the Sun King also became the embodiment of belligerent warfare. An early critic of Louis XIV, François-Paul de Lisola, who served as a diplomat for the Hapsburg Empire, denounced the French king's territorial ambitions and aggression against other states. Lisola viewed Louis XIV's attack on the Spanish Netherlands in 1667 in the War of the Devolution as a violation of international law and argued that the French monarch threatened to bring slavery upon Europe.[154] Later, in the 1680s, philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz criticized Louis XIV's absolute power and aggression toward the Holy Roman Emperor.[155]

Yet for a monarchy, victory was important. Persia had lost land to the Ottomans during the sixteenth century, but it had reclaimed much of those losses during the first half of the seventeenth century, especially under Abbas II. Border disputes between the two countries continued but finally came to an end when the two countries signed the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639.[156] This treaty signaled a weakness in Persia's military might, as it settled for a peace that granted concessions to the Ottomans and accepted the loss of Iraq and Baghdad. Although Chardin praised the Persians as tolerant and less inclined to war, he explained their declining military ambition as a result of their growing decadence. The root of the peace settlement lay not in the Persian love for peace but in their preference for leisure over military activity. The Persian penchant for luxury paralleled that of Louis XIV's court. This similarity became vividly apparent through the images and material culture that surrounded the diplomatic visit of Mohammad Reza Beg's visit of 1715.

## Understanding Persia

Chardin offered a detailed investigation of the Persian court in his *Coronation of Soleiman*, drawing a comparison between France and Persia that had been initiated by missionary-travelers in the early seventeenth century. Chardin desired to know Persia. In the preface to his *Travels*, Chardin confesses a "passion that I had to know well this vast Empire, to be able to give good and ample information."[157] He became a "student of language" to satisfy "the curiosity of our Europe touching a country that we could call another world, either for the distance of the places or for the difference of the mores and maxims."[158] Chardin believed language was the tool that would allow him to penetrate the foreign world of Persia. "In a word, I have taken so much trouble in educating myself on Persia, as I can say, for example, that . . . I speak Persian as easily as French; that I was fluent in reading and writing; and that I have traveled all over Persia."[159] In fact, Chardin claims that he did not write about India simply because he did not live there long enough to master the language.[160] Chardin felt his mastery of Persian language and his travels through the entire land gave him credibility and knowledge of the country that surpassed those of other travelers. In the *Coronation*, Chardin criticizes other travel accounts whose authors did not speak the language:

> But to make a true relation of a Country, it is necessary that they who describe it should know the language; else they must commit a thousand errors not

> passable among persons of Judgement, of which there needs no other proof, then such Relations of Travels which we have seen printed in this Age: Not to mention any other then those of Persia, of which there are two which are indifferently tolerable; Valle's and the Travels of Olearius: though the first be full of faults, which may be said to be Monstrous; and the latter be not altogether exempt. And yet they are better then the rest, in regard those Authors understood the Persian language; and therefore it is my Opinion that whoever publishes his Travels, and Observations of a country, of which he has not learnt the speech, shall never make any perfect and accomplish'd. And this digression I did not think would be displeasing to the curious.[161]

How well did Chardin actually know Persia? Chardin's *Coronation* reminds his readers that seventeenth-century travelers like himself were informed by new empirical methods in their search for truth. Yet, Chardin's desire to instruct with a comparison of Persia to France and Persia resembles old traditions of humanism that often relied on ancient knowledge and provided moral lessons.[162]

The *Coronation of Soleiman*, which directly addresses itself to Louis XIV, demonstrates how Chardin's Persia serves as a tutorial in kingship, especially for the French monarch. Chardin mastered the Persian language, referred to Persian sources, and his writings remain a fundamental source of information on Persia. Nevertheless, in the *Coronation*, Chardin approached Persia with French problems in mind. For him, Persia served as a mirror to France. That mirror, full of images of the virtues and vices of Persia, magnified the positive and negative qualities of French politics. This tendency to view Persia as a comparison to France was further developed by Louis XIV's court painter Charles le Brun, as in the Persian and pseudo-Persian texts that flowed into the royal library thanks to the efforts of French travelers and missionaries.

2

# Persia

## *A Courtly East in the French* Imaginaire

Seventeenth-century missionaries and travelers were not the only Frenchmen to describe Persia. In their portrayals of Persia, scholars of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Oriental studies emphasized the courtliness and civility of Persia, which served as a mirror of French polite society. André du Ryer was the first to adapt a Persian text into French in 1634, and it is not surprising that he chose the most illustrious handbook on behavior in the Persian language: *The Rose Garden*. This book resembled the guides on civility or *honnêteté* (a word for a lifestyle based on a certain code of ethics and aesthetics) that were popular in seventeenth-century France.[1] In the early eighteenth century, scholars created a fictional version of the Persian court that reflected French court society. The pages of the *Mille et un jours* recounted Oriental fairy tales about kings, princes, and princesses that fed into French interest in the subjects of court luxury and kingship. Persia appeared as a theater-state much like Louis XIV's France.

Comparisons to Persia also emerged in Louis XIV's propaganda scheme when Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's chief artist, produced his premier work, "The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander." These different representations of Persia in art and literature produced an imaginary version of Persian civility, court society, and kingship that resonated with French readers and the intellectual elite who were grappling to understand their own cultural and political identity.

## French Civility in *The Rose Garden*

André du Ryer's French translation of the famous Persian work *Gulistan, ou L'empire des roses* (*The Rose Garden*) introduced the French public to Persian literature in 1634. Du Ryer's translation was remarkable because knowledge of the Persian language in France remained limited to a select group of travelers, missionaries, and diplomats at the time. Missionaries remained the only official contacts between the French crown and Shah Abbas I's Persia in the early seventeenth century. However, Persian texts entered France via the Ottoman Empire through embassies that promoted French political interests and commerce and ensured the protection of Christianity there. Ambassadors and Orientalists who formed these diplomatic entourages brought Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscripts to France to aid in the study of Oriental languages. Diplomats

needed to learn Eastern languages in order to act as interpreters. Scholars, such as Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc and those in Joseph Scaliger's circle, used Oriental manuscripts to pursue their intellectual goals in the fields of astronomy, history, and chronology.[2]

Persian texts reached French scholars with Henri III's establishment of a chair in Arabic at the Collège Royal (now known as the Collège de France) in 1587. This propelled the study of Arabic and thereby Persian.[3] Although there was some interest in the Persian language and scholars collected Persian manuscripts along with Turkish and Arabic works, few tools existed to aid in the learning of Persian.[4] Diplomats and scholars who possessed Persian manuscripts in their collections could not read the language. No Persian grammar or dictionary existed in France until 1639, when Louis de Dieu published his Persian grammar book, *Rudimenta linguae persicae*, and 1669, when Jacobus Golius issued the first Persian-French dictionary.[5] In 1640, a Catholic from Isfahan, Said Esfahani, served as a Persian translator at Louis XIII's court for four years and helped spread knowledge of Persian to other scholars.[6] Before Esfahani, knowledge of Persian texts came only from Turkish and Arabic sources.[7]

The first evidence of the study of the Persian language in Paris dates to 1596, when Pierre-Victor Cayet, professor of Oriental languages, published *Paradigmata de quatuor linguis*, which reproduced a woodcut of a Persian poem with its Turkish translation next to it.[8] During the same period, the Medici Oriental Press in Rome, launched by Ferdinand de Medici, began producing books in Arabic. These were printed for the individual interested in reading Islamic sources. A Persian grammar was announced but never materialized.[9] The Italian Vecchietti brothers, who worked for the Oriental Press, traveled to Iran and India to search for manuscripts, becoming the first Europeans to bring Persian manuscripts, poetic texts, dictionaries, and Persian translations of the Bible to Europe.[10] The manuscripts that the Vecchietti brothers collected found their way to Paris by the end of the seventeenth century and into the possession of Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville, who held the post of royal secretary-interpreter of Oriental languages in 1656.[11] Most likely inspired by the Vecchietti brothers, François Savary de Brèves, French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1591 to 1606, also tried to devise a printing press that included the characters needed to produce texts in Oriental languages. The polyglot press that Savary de Brèves envisioned failed to materialize.[12]

De Brèves's role in André du Ryer's career in the study of foreign languages is well known. De Brèves, a friend of the du Ryer family, sent him to Egypt to learn Oriental languages. Du Ryer, born to a minor noble family in Marcigny, Burgundy, had been trained as an interpreter for embassies. Instead of attending university, scholars, called *jeunes de langue*, learned how to speak the languages of the Orient on a practical level when they were actually in the East.[13] Later, in 1623, thanks again to de Brèves, du Ryer became the vice consul in Egypt, where France was the premier European trader. However, in 1626, Louis XIII recalled du Ryer from the consulate after the latter became unpopular with the merchants. Despite this disgrace, du Ryer reentered the royal circle. He became the royal interpreter of Turkish and Arabic and in 1630 wrote one of the earliest Turkish grammars in Europe (the linguist Hieronymus Megiser printed the first in 1612 in Leipzig). Du Ryer's Turkish grammar was an especially important work in France, which, after Venice, had the most interactions with the Ottoman Empire of any European polity. French merchants, missionaries, and diplomats could all make use of the Turkish grammar in their dealings with the Ottoman Empire.

In 1631, du Ryer became the councilor and interpreter to the new French ambassador in Istanbul, Henri de Gournay, Comte de Marcheville. He continued to collect manuscripts in the Ottoman Empire just as he had during his tenure in Egypt. He amassed a collection of dictionaries, mostly Arabic-Turkish, Persian-Turkish, and Arabic-Persian. He also collected treatises on the Quran. Both types of texts would be useful for his groundbreaking work on Persian literature and the first translation of the Quran in Europe.[14]

André du Ryer translated the Persian literary masterpiece *Gulistan, ou L'empire des roses* by the celebrated Persian author Sadi, who wrote his first significant work, *Bustan* (*The Orchard*), after the Mongol conquest of Persia in 1252.[15] A year later, Sadi composed *The Rose Garden*, a "mirror for princes," or handbook and moral guidebook for kings that mixed prose with poetic passages. Like its European counterpart, Islamic advice literature delivered moral messages and examples of conduct to a royal or elite audience.[16] Unlike *Bustan*, whose audience was the ruling elite, *The Rose Garden* aimed at a broad public. In *The Rose Garden*, all kinds of people are portrayed: good, bad, pious, impious, and so on.[17] One learns how to behave and interact from reading about the encounters between these different types. In the first chapter, called "The Conduct of Kings," Sadi emphasizes that rulers should be just and prudent when deciding upon a course of action. The second chapter, "The Character of Dervishes," discusses Sufi morals and focuses on a variety of religious figures: for example, a person who is concerned with the visible acts of worship rather than their internal meaning (a hypocrite) and an ascetic who denies himself earthly pleasures. The third chapter, "The Superiority of Contentment," discusses how one should be satisfied and not desire more than one has. The next chapter, "The Benefits of Silence," disapproves of verbosity. The fifth chapter, "On Love and Youth," focuses on love between two males and heterosexual love in general. Chapter Six, "Feebleness and Old Age," considers the process of aging and how children should treat their parents and mocks older men who marry young women. Chapter Seven, "The Effects of Education," talks about education and the raising of children. The eighth chapter, "The Art of Education," contains a collection of witty sayings that apply to different situations.[18]

*The Rose Garden* became an educational tool throughout the Islamic world and a model for behavior. In the Ottoman Empire, the text became necessary to administrative careers that required knowledge of the Persian language, and educators used *The Rose Garden* to teach written composition. Cultivated people recited lines from the masterpiece as a sign of their learning.[19] This important text made its way into French libraries before André du Ryer's translation. Renowned throughout the Islamic world, *The Rose Garden* caught the attention of European collectors such as Richelieu, who owned three copies, and Pietro della Valle, who also owned a copy, which he annotated using the Persian he acquired through his travels.[20]

André du Ryer's translation appeared in Paris in 1634. Du Ryer follows Sadi's eight-chapter schema, but he did not translate the work in its entirety nor did he shy away from imparting his own mark on the text. He offered very free adaptations of Sadi's stories and sometimes completely replaced them with his own inventions.[21] Du Ryer's work highlights the role of the translator in the seventeenth century as adapter rather than translator. Translators imparted their work with their own creativity and fused Oriental and European ideas. The resulting "translation," therefore, arose from a process

of cultural exchange.[22] Some translators deliberately misrepresented foreign texts to appeal to European audiences.[23]

Du Ryer purposely altered *The Rose Garden* to match the seventeenth-century French taste for manuals of morals and manners, yet he made sure his readers believed his version to be a verifiable text from the Orient. Du Ryer emphasizes that he happened upon the text while researching during his travels, writing, "Leafing through the most interesting libraries in Egypt, in great Cairo and in Constantinople, I came upon a book titled Gulistan [*The Rose Garden*], that is to say, the Empire of Roses, which is well prized among them [Arabs, Persians, and Turks] for the subtlety of its speech, the sweetness of its poetry, and the solemnity of its sentences."[24] While reminding readers of its foreign provenance, Du Ryer announces his intention to edit the *Gulistan* to appear French and documents this objective without fear of criticism: "Since my return, I have been occupied with using some of my spare time to style this version in the French manner."[25] Du Ryer's approach exemplifies the methods of early modern translation, which did not require a scholar to stay true to the text's original style. Rather, translators acted as cultural mediators between the place of origin and its country of reception.[26] Translators sold their texts as products from the East but also felt no inhibition about altering them to meet their market of readers.

One of the major changes du Ryer made to the text was the removal of the poetic sections. He put the entire work into prose, thereby avoiding both the difficulty of translating stories that would not come across in the French language and culture and the problem of translating poetic verse.[27] Du Ryer readily admitted that his translation did not attempt to be faithful to the original Persian: "I do not have the refinement of language nor the sensibility for exquisite words to express his natural, truthful simplicity, and . . . it is difficult to match the grace of the prose and excellence of his verse."[28] While du Ryer defends his approach by referring to the difficulty of achieving the poetic splendor of the original, his choice can be explained by another possible motivation, which was to attract French readers. Instead of focusing on the poetry and beauty of the Persian language, which would only interest scholars of language and be of little interest to a wider French readership, he focused on relaying the moral content that would most interest his seventeenth-century audience. Du Ryer shortened many of Sadi's anecdotes and maxims to a few lines to suit them to French literary tastes. In their shortened form, Sadi's proverbs could even be said to anticipate the pithy sayings in François de la Rochefoucauld's book of maxims, published in 1665.[29]

Without the poetic verse, *The Rose Garden* fit directly into the popular genre of treatises on *honnêteté*.[30] Books on comportment, which often followed the example of Baldassare Castiglione's famous work, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), appealed to seventeenth-century French readers, who aspired to move up in social standing.[31] These readers sought works that helped them achieve the virtues of the *honnête homme*, which included physical discipline of the body with arts such as dance and fencing but also rigor of the mind, which included morals, manners, and education. Some of the French guides on civility from 1600 onward include *La Guide des Courtisans* (1606), *Le Gentilhomme* (1611), and *Traicté de la fortune des gens de qualité* (1658). The most famous of these texts, Nicolas Faret's *L'Honneste homme ou l'art de plaire a la court*, appeared in 1630 and had already been reprinted twice (in 1631 and 1633) before André du Ryer's translation of *The Rose Garden* appeared in 1634.[32] Du Ryer likely

detected the similarities between Sadi's Persian text and Faret's popular book, both of them dealing with behaviors and morals.

Both Du Ryer's *Rose Garden* and Nicolas Faret's *L'Honneste homme* open with a warning about court life. In Du Ryer's first story, a king commands the death of an innocent man, who in turn curses the king. When the king asks what the man is saying, one of his ministers responds with the words of the condemned man: "God pardons those who are in control of their anger and have pity on the people."[33] This phrase touched the king and brought forth his mercy for the sentenced prisoner. Another minister envious of the first told the king the truth: that the doomed man uttered slander against the king. The king replied that the lie of the first man was more agreeable than the truth. The story ends with the moral that a lie followed by good is better than a truth that is harmful.[34] The story warns of courtiers whose ambition dominate their deeds. Faret similarly counsels that "men seldom act from right motives" and that "Envy, Avarice, and Ambition, constantly attend near the Persons of the Kings."[35] The two authors, Faret and du Ryer, criticize the courtier and encourage morality.

One virtue emphasized in both texts is modesty. Du Ryer, for instance, includes a story about a king's son who was uncommonly short. The king looked upon him scornfully, to which the son replied, "My father, a small wise man is worth more than a tall fool; large things are not always those which are worth a great value."[36] Soon after, the son proves himself in battle and shows his worth. *The Rose Garden* then moralizes, "When speaking, a man should make known his faults and his merits, and the one who is silent hides them both."[37] Du Ryer's story emphasizes the necessity of modesty to understand both one's virtues and, equally, one's faults. Likewise, Faret emphasizes that an *honnête homme* should know the art of speaking about oneself; "Modesty is a sublime virtue: A discreet manner of speaking of one's own actions, and a liberal way of praising those of others as they deserve, is highly commendable. By that means we stifle the Envy of those who are disposed to oppose our Glory."[38] Du Ryer's short prince follows Faret's rules: he acknowledges his faults but also highlights his virtues.

Vital to an *honnête homme*'s success was the art of conversation, including knowing when to keep quiet. Both Faret and du Ryer underscore the importance of silence. *The Rose Garden*'s chapter on silence opens with the story of a man who is asked why he does not say a word when in company. He replies, "I like silence because most speech is good and bad, and our enemies only keep watch for the bad."[39] On silence, Faret writes, "But we must . . . oppose those who talk too much: Truly this is one of the greatest faults in conversation, and is most hurtful in life, as silence is one of the most useful sciences. He who has not command of himself, ought not to hazard his fortune at court: This virtue may seem easy to acquire, and yet it may be said there is none more difficult, nor more rare."[40]

Both du Ryer and Faret focus on the destructive influence of ambition and material possessions. In his chapter on the dervishes, du Ryer emphasizes Sadi's instruction against the acquisition of wealth and the benefits of an ascetic life. One vignette relates the story of a king who meets a poor dervish living in the woods. The king offers him a more comfortable place to live in the city, where townspeople can experience the dervish's exemplary life for themselves. Later, the king meets the man in his new quarters and finds him dressed in crimson and seated on a velvet cushion, surrounded by magnificently dressed servants. The moral of the story arrives when the king's minister

says that the king should give money to scholars to allow them to study and not to give anything to the dervishes to enable them to remain good religious servants.[41] At another point in the text, du Ryer's translation emphasizes the dangers of wealth and reminds the reader, "It is better to be good and of good grace than to have handsome clothes."[42] Faret, too, warns of "the insatiable desire of acquiring" and instead advocates "the blind content of giving."[43] Faret insists that the *honnête homme* be as generous as the model king described by du Ryer, who gives his treasures away.[44]

Du Ryer's *The Rose Garden* was not reprinted; yet its importance lies in its novelty and not in its long-term popularity. The work introduced Persian literature to Europeans who were not necessarily educated in Oriental languages. While Sadi was well known to those interested in Oriental studies, Du Ryer brought Sadi's tales to a wider audience with a taste for morals and manners and characterized Sadi as "the prince of Persian poets."[45] Later, André Daulier Deslandes, a traveler and author on Persia, would also proclaim Sadi "the most famous of their [Persia's] poets."[46] Du Ryer's *Gulistan* was translated into German by Johann Friedrich Ochsenbach in 1636.[47] Thereafter, new translations of the original Persian *Gulistan* (rather than translations that started from du Ryer's French version) appeared in Europe: Adam Olearius, the famous traveler to Persia, produced his own German translation in 1654 and criticized du Ryer's version as inaccurate.[48] Du Ryer's work also influenced one of the most popular French travel works of the seventeenth century: Jean Chardin's *Voyages de Monsieur le Chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient* included stories from the *Gulistan*, and it inspired La Fontaine, especially in "Le Songe d'un habitant du Mogol" (1679).[49]

*The Rose Garden*, above all, transmitted an image of a civilized Persia that valued good manners and moral acts. Although Sadi wrote his masterpiece almost three centuries before du Ryer's translation appeared in France, the spirit of the work fit with contemporary French sensibilities. Du Ryer did not include any background on Sadi, thirteenth-century Persia, or the origins of the Persian masterpiece.[50] By excluding scholarly information, du Ryer made the text appear contemporary and similar to French works on correct behavior or *honnêteté*. As a result, French readers of du Ryer's work could imagine Persia as a civilized society similar to their own.

## French and Persian Courts

With du Ryer's translation of the *Gulistan*, travel narratives about Persia and the "Orient" increased in popularity. These texts both satisfied and piqued the curiosity of French readers, who now eagerly sought them out. Most travel narratives straddled the line between fiction and reality and emphasized the extraordinary for the sake of entertainment.[51]

French readers also enjoyed French fairy tales, which reached their height of popularity between 1690 and 1700, a time when French readers longed for an escape from the "crisis" described by Paul Hazard.[52] The period from 1680 to 1700 served as a transitional period in which Jansenism, Protestantism, and witchcraft challenged the monarchy.[53] Fairy tales fit into a burgeoning escapist literature.[54] However, the tales also provided moral lessons.

Oriental fairy tales appeared in 1704 with the publication of Antoine Galland's first volume of the *Mille et une nuits* (*Thousand and One Nights*). Antoine Galland, a French Orientalist who held the Arabic chair at the Collège de France from 1709 until his death in 1715, translated these "Arabian" stories into French and adapted them to French tastes.[55] Galland published ten volumes between 1704 and 1711, and two posthumous volumes appeared in 1717. At about the same time as the *Mille et une nuits*, François Pétis de la Croix published Persian tales, the *Mille et un jours* or *Thousand and One Days*, in five volumes from 1710 to 1712, and dedicated the work to the Duchesse de Bourgogne. It became an extremely popular book and was reprinted eight times in the eighteenth century and fifteen times during the nineteenth century.[56]

François Pétis de la Croix was named after his father, who served as the secretary and interpreter to the king for Turkish and Arabic. In 1670, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's finance minister, sent the younger Pétis de la Croix, who was just seventeen, to the Orient to learn its languages and customs. During his travels and service to the French ambassador in the Ottoman Empire, he collected manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish for the royal library (Bibliothèque du Roi). In 1680, he took his father's position as royal interpreter for Turkish and Persian and performed diplomatic functions. After receiving the chair of Arabic at the Collège Royal in 1692, he undertook numerous translations and published the *Histoire de Genghis Can, Histoire de la sultane de Perse et des Vizirs (recueil de contes turcs 1707)*, and the *Mille et un jours* from 1710 to 1712. After his death in 1713, his son published his *Histoire de Timur-Bec* in 1722.[57]

Both Antoine Galland and François Pétis de la Croix profited from the continued popularity of travel narratives and mixed that genre with the fairy tale. Although their tales involved fantastic plots similar to those found in French fairy tales, these stories, like travel narratives, provided information on the Orient, and like manuals on *honnêteté*, they taught moral lessons. The authors encouraged their readers to take the descriptions of the Oriental setting as seriously as those found in travel journals. Galland wrote in his preface, "They [the Arabian tales] must also please by [relating] Oriental customs and morals, the ceremonies and their religion, more pagan than Islamic; and these subjects are more marked . . . than in the travel journals." He continued, "Thereby, without having to endure the strain of going to find these people in their country, the reader will have the pleasure here of watching them react and hearing them speak. We were careful to conserve their character while not straying far from their expressions and their feelings."[58] Pétis de la Croix similarly distinguished his work from ordinary fairy tales and compared it to the travel genre.[59] He wrote,

> These tales are as useful as they are pleasurable. Indeed, they mark the geography with exactitude, and they describe the morals and customs of different peoples of Asia. If the setting of one tale is in the land of the Tartars, for example, one senses that one lives differently there from in Baghdad or in Egypt. The dishes, the drinks, the clothing all characterize the nations under discussion. . . . In short, we can look upon the *Mille et un jours* like travel narratives, in other words, like a work filled with truthful observations and worthy of the curiosity of the public.[60]

Scholars such as Montesquieu used the Oriental fairy tales of Galland and Pétis de la Croix as references. For example, Montesquieu notes in his *Pensées*, "Persians, as it is written in a note in the *Mille et un jours* (volume II, page 18) written by M. Pétis de la Croix, believe that all that is to happen until the end of the world is written on a table of light, called a *louh*, with a feather of fire called a *calamazar*, and the writing that is on top is called *caza* or *cadar*, that is to say inevitable predestination."[61]

To present the fairy tales as factual rather than fictional writings, Galland and Pétis de la Croix claimed their books were translations of authentic Oriental stories. Galland, for example, concealed the fact that he drew from different texts, as well as his own imagination, by claiming his text came from a single Arabic source.[62] Selling their works as translations gave them the luster of authenticity. Likewise, François Pétis de la Croix made a strong case for the Persian origins of his stories. He went so far as to say that he met their author, Dervish Mukhlis, in Isfahan in 1675. Pétis de la Croix claimed that once they became friends, Dervish Mukhlis gave him a copy of his manuscript. In his preface, he writes, "We owe these tales to the famous Dervish Mukhlis . . . the head of the sofis in Isphahan. . . . The king, Schah-Soliman, respected him to such an extent that if he encountered him while on his way somewhere, the prince would dismount his horse and go to kiss his stirrups."[63] Pétis de la Croix describes how Mukhlis translated Indian comedies into Persian and then proceeded to turn them into tales and infuse them with his own ideas. Once more, in the preface to his second volume, Pétis de la Croix reaffirms the provenance of the original Persian manuscript by emphasizing that Mukhlis produced the tales and ensured that they corresponded to "images that represent [Oriental] realities and official custom."[64] By reminding his readers of the Persian authenticity of his work, he marketed his tales as ethnographic documents.

Attributing the authorship of the tales to a Persian dervish further legitimized them. Pétis de la Croix's Dervish Mukhlis symbolized the wisdom and political importance of Sufis in Persia—Jean Chardin, in his popular *Travels*, called Sufis "an ancient and famous sect." His etymology of the word *Sufi* speaks to their revered status. One of the possibilities he gives for the origin of the term is the word *saf*, meaning "order," signifying the Sufis' first rank. Another possibility he gives is the Greek term *sofos*, meaning "wisdom," because Sufis, he says, are the true philosophers of Islam. Persian Sufis, claims Chardin, differ from other Sufis in that they serve as the guardians of the palace and the body of the king. The Safavid dynasty, notes Chardin, originated from the "Soufys Sefevie [Safavid Sufis]" or "Soufys of Soufys," which is the name for the founder and first shah of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail, who was descended from the Safaviyeh Sufi order.[65]

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, scholars believed that Dervish Mukhlis was the author of the *Mille et un jours*. Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, Orientalists began to doubt Pétis de la Croix's claim of having obtained the original manuscript in Isfahan. The Austrian Orientalist J. de Hammer searched for the original manuscript in the royal library where Pétis de la Croix claimed it could be found. Failing to locate it, he concluded that it never existed at all. After searching archives in Asia and Europe, other scholars followed suit and agreed that an original Persian document of Pétis de la Croix's stories never existed.[66] According to Paul Sebag, a man named Mukhlis did live in Isfahan toward the end of the seventeenth century, and François Pétis de la Croix knew him. But, he adds, "it is the French Orientalist and not Mukhlis who wrote the *Mille et un Jours*."[67]

Though Du Ryer refitted *The Rose Garden* for a French audience, Galland and Pétis de la Croix rewrote and even fabricated much of their "translation." Despite their creative imprint on their work, these scholars were all accepted as translators of authoritative texts from the Orient. Although François Pétis de la Croix's work, like Galland's, may not actually be the direct translation or adaptation of a Persian tale, it was nevertheless based on Persian sources and recalls the work of the translator in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Paul Sebag's discussion of possible sources suggests that most of Pétis de la Croix's stories are taken from a Turkish manuscript called *Al-Faraj ba'd al-shidda* (La joie après la peine—joy after sorrow), a collection of forty stories translated from Persian to Turkish. Pétis de la Croix also drew from other manuscripts located in the royal library and loosely adapted them into the *Mille et un jours*.[68] To create a distinctly French work of literature that spoke to contemporary French concerns, he wove together a number of Oriental tales and inserted his own inventions, resulting in a text that not only met the demands of the French reading public that desired to learn more about the Orient but also spoke to pressing French issues such as a decadent court and religious intolerance.

Pétis de la Croix's choice of a dervish could not help but remind readers of religious issues in France. French writers and travelers, including Chardin, were aware of the heresy associated with Sufis in Persia. Chardin, for example, remarked that the *dévots Mohometans* accused them of being atheists. Pierre Bayle also noted the relationship between Sufis and heretics, while Chardin and another influential travel writer, François Bernier, compared Sufism to Quietism, both of which emphasized the believer's union with God.[69] Quietists were heretical, condemned by the Pope in 1687. Although the Sufis founded and supported the Safavid dynasty, through the seventeenth century Sufis in Persia declined in political, military, and religious significance; they were replaced by Shiite clerics and pushed to the fringes of society.[70]

Pétis de la Croix claims that Dervish Muhklis was the head of an influential Sufi order, the Melevi, which had been founded by the famous thirteenth-century poet Rumi and was known for its members' practice of whirling. He further claims that he visited Mukhlis to study the *Masnavi*, a difficult thirteenth-century text by Rumi. He notes that Mukhlis was monitored by the royal Safavid court, which would have considered his Sufi order a threat to state-sponsored Shiism and a potential political rival. Pétis de la Croix protected himself by announcing to the court that his visits to the dervish were solely for study.[71] Surely the Persian dervish suggested to Pétis de la Croix a world of religious intolerance that mirrored French persecution of the Protestants, Jansenists, and Quietists.

For Frenchmen, dervishes also symbolized monks. Montesquieu criticized monks through his fictional Persian traveler, Usbek, whose mocking letter substitutes dervishes for monks. It begins, "An immense number of courtesans are maintained by the libertines of Paris, and a great crowd of dervishes by its bigots. These dervishes take three oaths: of obedience, of poverty, and of chastity. They say that the first is the best observed of the three; as to the second, it is not observed at all; you can form your own opinion with regard to the third."[72] Jean-Frédéric Bernard, best known for his collaboration with the engraver Bernard Picart on the *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peoples du monde . . .* (published between 1723 and 1743 and translated into English in 1733–39 as *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World . . .*),

is an example of another French writer who associated dervishes with monks.[73] Pétis de la Croix's dervish evoked questions regarding Catholic monks and the clergy. Sufis in Persia, who according to travelers such as Chardin were wise and tolerant and wrote brilliant prose and poetry, were a good point of comparison with the French clergy. However, as Bernard cynically pointed out, "Monks are always monks wherever they may be found."[74]

Pétis de la Croix's readership also sought criticism of French courtly society. He based the framing of his work on Galland's *Mille et une nuits* in which a narrator, Scheherazade, recounts tales pointing to many different aspects of Persia that parallel France. In Pétis de la Croix's book, the frame of the story is based upon the Persian tale "Farrukhshâd, Farrukhroûz et Farrukhnâz," in which a princess, Farrukhnâz, refuses to marry. Pétis de la Croix took the original Persian story about the princess and added a nurse, who tells tales for a thousand and one days like Scheherazade from the *Mille et une nuits*. Within the framework of the court, the princess, and the nurse, Pétis de la Croix told many stories drawn from original Oriental sources.[75]

The *Mille et un jours* describes a luxurious, courtly world that reminded French readers of the luxurious and decadent world of Versailles. In one of the stories, a prince visits a man who owns an inexhaustible treasure and describes the opulent hospitality he receives from him: "In the room [were] twelve white pages holding vases of agate and rock crystal, enhanced with rubies and full of exquisite liqueurs; they were followed by twelve very beautiful slaves, some of whom carried porcelain basins filled with fruits and flowers, and the others carried gold boxes which contained preserves of an excellent taste."[76] The text also details the entertainment of the courtier-like class, for whom the most beautiful women danced and played various instruments. For one of the heroes of the tales, "some of these ladies started to dance and the others played the harp, the guitar of David or *canoun*, the arganoun organ, and the barbot violin."[77] The description of the treasure, jewels, and entertainments recalled the sumptuous lifestyle and spectacles of the Bourbon court.

Kings in Pétis de la Croix's Persian world displayed opulence comparable to Louis XIV's theater-state.[78] Both the Safavid and Bourbon kings manifested their power through visibility and spectacle. Although the palace of the Safavid rulers had private spaces, impenetrable to the public gaze, the Safavids still ruled more informally and personally than their Ottoman and Mughal contemporaries.[79] Travelers remarked on the public's accessibility to the Persian shah, similar to that of European monarchs. Chardin described the shah's attendance at public festivals and his parades through the city.[80] André Daulier Deslandes is another traveler who described the shah's summertime promenades through the squares in a way that evokes the outings of the French king.[81]

The *Mille et un jours* takes the spectacle of Persian princes and reinterprets it to fit French conceptions of Oriental wealth that also mirror French extravagance. In one of the stories, Pétis de la Croix describes the magnificence of the royal wardrobe: the opulent outfit worn by the king of the Tartars was "covered with diamonds, rubies, emeralds," and he "was seated on an ivory throne."[82] This description exaggerates the spectacle of the prince and is reminiscent of the famous suit that Louis XIV wore for the embassy of the Persian ambassador in 1715; as the Duc de Saint-Simon reports, the French king's suit "was trimmed with the finest diamonds of the crown jewels."[83] The Oriental gardens also contained beautiful sights and sounds, mirroring the spectacle of

the French royal gardens of Versailles that projected the Sun King's power.[84] The royal garden in one of the stories of the *Mille et un jours* is "full of the rarest flowers . . . several pools of marble, porphyry, and jasper, that served as tanks for a countless number of beautiful fish. In the middle of the garden appeared a dome on very high black marble columns with a vault of sandalwood and aloe."[85] The garden also included an "an aviary full of thousands and thousands of canaries of varied colors, nightingales, warblers, and other harmonious birds, who, blending their songs, made a charming concert."[86] The mention of the aviaries linked the *Mille et un jours* with the fashion for canaries in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century France. Canaries became an expensive and popular exotic import for the upper classes.[87]

The world Pétis de la Croix conjures, despite its pleasures and riches, is also insecure. The rich and powerful easily lose their fortunes if they upset their ruler. Throughout the *Mille et un jours*, everything depends on the favor of the king, who can dismiss people or grant them more power as he pleases. At one point in the work, the image of despotism is clear when the king threatens his vizier with death if he is found to be lying: "Do you know well . . . that a subject who has the audacity to lie in front of his master deserves death?"[88] Yet the poor can also rise quickly through royal favor. In another story, the king of the Tartars saves a man by granting him royal protection and a place in his court.[89] The rich and poor are not the only ones at the mercy of fate and their despotic state. Everything is uncertain, even kingship. In one of the tales, a military attack by a neighboring ruler causes a king and his family to lose their crown.[90] This story reminds the sovereign that he must prioritize state and military affairs or lose his royal position. In addition, people's fortunes can be changed through magical elements that pervade Persia—there are genies, a cup that continually replenishes itself with wine, a peacock that spreads beautiful perfumes when he opens his wings and tail, a treasure that can never be depleted no matter how much is removed from it. All this added to the picture of a vulnerable world that resonated with French concerns about their court and Bourbon kingship.

Yet literature was not the only venue for works that put forth ideas of Persian courts and kingship. Between André du Ryer's publication of his French version of *The Rose Garden* and Pétis de la Croix's tales, representations of Persian rulers and their courts emerged in the Alexander myth spun around Louis XIV.

## Persia and Princely Virtue

Persian imagery shaped one of the major themes of Louis XIV's propaganda: Louis XIV as Alexander the Great. The first painting of Charles Le Brun's Alexander series, "The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander," launched the career of Le Brun and successfully introduced Louis XIV as *le nouveau Alexandre*. The painting depicted Alexander's first encounter with the Persian court. Le Brun's scene highlights the virtuous qualities of the Persian noblewomen, who greet their conqueror with great dignity. At the same time, the painting presents the Persian court as a foil to bring out Alexander's princely virtues. Finally, the painting also portrays the luxuriousness and despotism that caused the ultimate downfall of the ancient Persian Empire.

When Louis XIV began his personal rule in 1661, he sought to improve his royal image. The young king approved of a painting on the subject of Alexander the Great that

would link his rule to that of the Macedonian.[91] The Queen Mother and Cardinal Mazarin recommended the artist Charles Le Brun, who was then commissioned to paint a series of scenes in the life of Alexander in the Orient that would serve as allegories for the king's own virtues.

Louis XIV was not the first Bourbon king to liken himself to Alexander. Under the reign of Louis XIII, Alexander became one of the antique heroes used to legitimize the king's rule. Seventeenth-century French scholars read about Alexander the Great's conquests in the Orient through many sources, such as Quintus Curtius and Plutarch, and began to use him as a model of good kingship. Analogies drawn between the Bourbon monarchs and Alexander served to anchor the Bourbon monarchy in ancient authority.[92] It did not matter that Louis XIII was not a great conqueror like Alexander because the literature that praised the French king did not attempt a thoroughly realistic portrait.[93] Instead, parallels were based on certain similar situations or events. For example, Alexander and Louis XIII had fathers who were assassinated. Further, writers compared La Rochelle to the Mediterranean city of Tyr (Tyre, now in modern-day Lebanon). In 1628, the "Letter . . . on the connection between the siege of La Rochelle and that of the city of Tyr, besieged and conquered by Alexander the Great," portrayed Tyr and La Rochelle as independent mercantile republics that resisted unification efforts. Additionally, both regions were traitors: La Rochelle sought aid from the English, while Tyr had sought help from the Carthaginians.[94] In 1639, another

*Figure 2.1* The captured queens of Persia appear before Alexander the Great, who treats them with magnanimity and respect. Alexander conquered the Persian Empire, ruled by Darius III, in 330 B.C. Early in his reign, Louis XIV was called "the new Alexander," and this painting drew parallels between the French monarch and the Greek conqueror. *RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY*

text, entitled *L'Histoire d'Alexandre le Grand tirée de Quinte-Curse et autres,* by Bernard Lesfargues, used the Alexander myth to justify the French alliance with the Protestants during the Thirty Years' War.[95]

Before he started working for the king in 1661, Charles le Brun was called to the Château de Fontainebleau to paint a subject of his choice or scene from the life of Alexander under the king's gaze. To celebrate Louis XIV's kingship, Charles Le Brun selected a scene from Alexander's life that was largely unknown to French painters. Italian artists, including Giovanni Bazzi (also known as Il Sodoma) and Paolo Veronese, had already painted the conqueror's initial confrontation with Darius's family, but a French painter had never depicted it before.[96]

Le Brun's version of this scene, titled "The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander" (1661), resonated with its seventeenth-century audience, stirring admiration for the king's virtues. André Félibien, the prominent seventeenth-century writer on the arts and court historian, praised Le Brun for selecting a particular moment in the encounter between Alexander and the Persian queens: "The craft of the artist is admirable, in that by wanting to paint the meeting of Alexander and the queens, he chose the moment when Sysigambis [Darius's mother] threw herself at the feet of Alexander and demanded his pardon."[97] Sysigambis had mistaken Ephestion, Alexander's general and friend, for Alexander, and upon realizing her mistake she begged for Alexander's forgiveness. Félibien adds, "The painter could not have exposed the eyes of the greatest king in the world [Louis XIV] to an action more famous and distinguished, since history reports it as one of the most glorious acts that Alexander had ever performed, due to the clemency and moderation that the prince showed in this meeting; in overcoming himself, he overcame not the barbarous peoples but the conqueror of all nations."[98] Alexander's graciousness toward the family of his defeated enemy was an expression of princely manners, a subject that greatly interested seventeenth-century Frenchmen, especially through Pierre Corneille' s play *Cinna ou la clémence d'Auguste* (1643), which introduced the theme of clemency as an important topic.[99] Auguste in *Cinna* and Alexander both overcome the urge for vengeance and choose clemency; this was seen as a political tactic to make allies through virtuous actions.

The art historians Louis Marchesano and Christian Michel explain how the historical moment of the meeting between Alexander and the Persian queens allowed Le Brun to demonstrate his interpretation of the "Grand Manner," a narrative style of painting defined by *historia*, which "consisted of idealized figures from mythology."[100] Félibien dubbed the style "sublime" because it includes the other genres, such as portraiture and still life. French painter Nicolas Poussin wrote, "The grand manner consists in four things: in the [subject] matter, which is to say the argument, in the conceit, in the structure, in the style."[101] Le Brun's painting followed Poussin's formula, in that all the elements of the painting worked to strengthen its single message: the king's self-control. Félibien and Poussin both warned the artist not to distract from the message with superficial details. "The Queens of Persia" exemplifies Le Brun's ability to do just that, with its muted colors, polished surface, and clear contours directing the viewer to the message of the king's clemency.[102]

Alexander's gracious act toward the queens was not to be missed.[103] The seventeenth-century audience was meant to read the historical paintings as if they were written works. The spectator is enticed into reading the painting by trying to decipher which of the two male figures is Alexander. The onlooker must read the clues to figure out that the

man wearing the scarlet mantle fastened with a diamond clasp must be Alexander. The other figure, whose clasp is inset with an agate cameo of Alexander, must be Ephestion, because Alexander would not wear a representation of himself. The viewer then proceeds to read the emotions of the faces. Félibien describes the signs of each figure that clearly signify a certain emotion. Alexander, for example, shows clemency with his open and extended hand and reveals friendship with his other hand, placed on Ephestion. Alexander's left leg, so argues Félibien, is moved backward, indicating civility toward the Persian court. Sysigambis, who has misidentified Alexander, shows humiliation though her downcast eyes and haphazardly laid robes. The other faces represent grief, admiration, respect, supplication, uncertainty, placation, wonder, anxiety, and fear among other emotions.[104]

The emphasis on legibility of the faces and the general message of the painting is reinforced by Gérard Edelinck's 1675 print of Le Brun's "The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander." Le Brun's most famous works were reproduced in large-format prints for the *Cabinet du Roi*, a state-sponsored collection of 950 prints in twenty-three volumes. The *Cabinet du Roi* was part of Colbert's vision to project the state's magnificence. The crown gifted these volumes to foreign dignitaries and princes as well as to French and other elites. In order to pay the skilled printmakers for their copperplates, Colbert and his team sold the prints to the public. The *Mercure galant* of 1679, for instance, advertised a price list for the royal prints. The most expensive prints were those in the Alexander series, which included the "Queens of Persia." Le Brun himself promoted the reproduction of his masterpieces into prints and even selected their printmakers.

The prints were so successful that they eclipsed the original paintings. By 1683, the copperplates had produced 1,600 impressions of "Alexander and Porus" and 1,700 each of "Crossing of the Granicus," "Battle of Arbela," and "Triumphal Entry of Alexander into Babyon," but "The Queens of Persia" surpassed the others, with 1,850 imprints. Le Brun ensured the success of the print by selecting Gérard Edelinck, of Flemish origin, to reproduce his painting into printed form. Edelinck, a printmaker who came from the school of Rubens, could recreate "the painted effects of tone, color texture, and form" by "varying engraved lines and the relationship between them."[105] Under Colbert's management, Edelinck worked with Le Brun to achieve the details in specific expressions of the characters, as well as the overall expression of the painting.[106]

Félibien's book on the painting and the print by Edelinck, as Marchesano and Michel state, point to the importance of clearly expressing the action in the painting. The composition and expressions spelled out the moment when the king acted with self-control. This was made even clearer with the words on the print: "It is for a king to vanquish himself. Alexander, having vanquished Darius near the town of Issus, came to the tent where the mother, wife, and daughters of Darius were, where he provided a singular example of restraint and clemency."[107]

"The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander" inaugurates a double identification of the king with Alexander: at once Louis XIV becomes not just the greatest conqueror but also capable of conquering himself. Alexander's conduct toward his defeated Persian enemies conveyed the virtues that the young French king wished to project about himself.

Recent scholarly readings of the painting, however, have glossed over the role of the Persian queens in the scene and their role in eliciting the king's virtues when, in fact, the

Persian women's dignity toward Alexander inspired his gracious response. The importance of the Persian women is best understood in light of the role elite women played in the development of French culture. In the first half of the seventeenth century, a select group of high-ranking women, such as the Marquise de Rambouillet, the Marquise de Sablé, the Grande Mademoiselle, Madame de Sévigné, and Madame de Lambert, to name a few, were instrumental in defining French taste and behavior through their illustrious gatherings or *ruelles*, better known as salons.[108] Seventeenth-century contemporaries understood that women established and directed the rules of polite conversation.[109] Women also served as literary arbiters, who not only set the standards for French literature but also shaped aristocratic style and a national French culture.[110]

The Persian women brought forth polite behavior from Alexander just as the salon women created rules of comportment for their male counterparts. Darius's noblewomen are models of conduct that resemble the powerful salon women who surrounded the Bourbon court. Seventeenth-century contemporaries noted the influence of Darius's queens on the conqueror. Jean Puget de la Serre in his *Le Portrait d'Alexandre le Grand dédié à Mgr. le Dauphin*, written in 1641, described the same scene that Le Brun painted. He noted that "Alexander was touched by some feeling of kindness out of admiration for Darius's wife, as she was the wonder of her time in beauty. . . . Never has a monarch shown such moderation and continence as [Alexander] in his meeting with one of the masterpieces of nature's wonders."[111] It was the queen who stirred Alexander's unprecedented act of moderation and restraint. Her dignified manner prevented him from falling to temptation; he resisted any desire to humiliate her and take her as his prize.

Le Brun's painting illustrates the noble behavior of the Persian women that Puget de la Serre described. Félibien's description of the painting highlights the impact of the Persian ladies and their entourage on the Greek heroes. Félibien makes it clear that the Persian women had particular virtues that drew out the magnanimous gestures of Alexander and his men. He writes, "As for Ephestion, he appears completely surprised . . . due to the beauty of the princesses upon whom his eyes remained fixed."[112] Félibien also praises Le Brun's portrayal of the physical beauty of the queens. However, the women's beauty is not a voluptuous beauty but one that commands admiration. The women are beautiful but also noble. Félibien writes, "What grandeur, what nobility, and what beauty were displayed in the faces of the queens and princesses? Can we not say that historians even went so far to describe Darius's wife and her two daughters as the most beautiful people in the Orient?"[113] He continues, "The sadness, the respect, and the humility cannot be better expressed than in the person of Sysigambis, Darius's mother. She is at the feet of Alexander, where she submits to Alexander on behalf of the entire family."[114] Félibien commends Sysigambis: "Her eyes are lowered to the ground to show that she has no thought of her past fortune; her clothes hang carelessly, evincing her humiliation. However, despite her humility and strong submission, we cannot help remarking that she has a great deal of grandeur and majesty."[115]

Félibien also describes the other female figures in the painting, who portray admirable qualities. "The Queen, Darius's wife," he writes, "is on her knees behind Sysigambis. She wears a tiara on her head in the fashion of the queens of Persia. Her cloak is purple bordered by scarlet." He continues, "It is in Darius's wife that grief is admirably portrayed. . . . At the same time because she is beautiful and young, amidst all the sadness and unhappiness, she maintains her good manners and a majesty worthy of

a queen."[116] Darius's wife's noble character makes Alexander's compassion toward her court possible. "We also know well that in looking at Alexander in the manner that she does, she tries through her glances, which are the interpreters of her pain, to make the soul of this prince capable of compassion."[117] Darius's daughter expresses another sentiment: the sorrow of the court's situation. "Regarding Statira, she is a princess who sheds tears and who abandons herself to her sorrow. . . . She keeps her eyes half-closed, as if she is trying to shy away from the looks of this conqueror and hide from herself the deplorable situation in which she finds herself: for what other feelings could such a great beauty and such royal courage have upon seeing herself in a captive and imploring position?"[118]

Accordingly, the painting creates an image of Persia as a civilized society that inspires virtue in the greatest of kings, even Alexander, who symbolizes Louis XIV, the ultimate seventeenth-century prince. Persia thus serves as the foil to bring out French princely qualities.

While the Persian and French court shared affinities, differences also existed. Le Brun's painting conjured an image of despotism hidden under the veil of model comportment. Félibien discusses one of the Persian men in the image "who prostrates himself on the ground and who, according to the custom of his country, gives signs of his submission and obedience through this act. Since consternation was so great amongst those of this court, and only having heard of Alexander's valor and great deeds, they [Persians] did not know yet of his clemency or generosity."[119] This submissive figure in the painting suggests that members of the Persian court expected to succumb completely to their monarch.

Félibien also directs our attention to a eunuch: "This semi-nude man, who brings his arm over the princesses, is one of these eunuchs in the queens' entourage, who brings it to Sysigambis's attention that she is mistaken [about the identity of Alexander]; and his action admirably expresses what he means to convey."[120] We learn that "it is the custom of these people to take off their outfits and to rip up their clothes when they find themselves in mourning and grief."[121] Félibien continues, "These people were in a deep state of grief, not only due to the captivity in which they found themselves, but also by the thoughts they had concerning Darius's death."[122]

The presence of the eunuch reminds the viewer of a striking difference between Oriental and Western courts: the harem. The eunuch represents the passions and vices of Persia. Félibien interprets the man's nudity as a sign of his grief and his inability to maintain his composure. While Alexander overcomes his passions, the eunuch succumbs to them. The prostrate man and the eunuch in the painting signal to the painting's audience that despite Persia's affinities with France, it still practices vices that would be unacceptable in the ideal world of European court society. The painting, therefore, illustrates another virtue of Louis XIV: his singular form of rule that blended ideas of rational order with absolutism, in contrast to despotism. The young Louis XIV was not considered a despot early in his reign. Instead, in the words of Larry Norman, Louis XIV was "something of an enlightened despot *avant la lettre*."[123]

By 1661, when Le Brun created "The Queens of Persia" to inaugurate the young king's adult reign, challenges threatened the authority of the salon women as arbiters of taste. Opposition developed between the salons and the Académie Française, founded by Richelieu in 1634 to preserve French literary and language standards. The competition

between the two rival groups began in the 1640s and concluded by the 1670s with the affirmation of the Academy as the official judge of French cultural matters.[124] However, the moment of "The Queens of Persia" sits at a pivotal moment in the shift away from the power of the salons. Through her analysis of the induction speeches for the Academy, Faith Beasley shows how the state institution publicly proclaimed their role as the definitive judges. In 1661 and 1662, she writes, "the rhetoric of the speeches seems to declare the battle over false authorities [the salons] won."[125] One can see the defeated position of Darius's wives and daughters as reflecting the decline of the salon women's power. The Academy provided government supervision of language and culture and, like the other academies, glorified France by promoting works that commemorated the king's reign.[126] It is no wonder that Louis XIV would be doubly impressed by a painting that portrayed polite women who brought forth his virtues, yet at the same time under his control in the guise of a conqueror.

Félibien's descriptions of Le Brun's work show that Persian manners draw out Alexander's virtues. Yet Persia contains other elements necessary to signal Louis XIV's qualities. Persia is at once a beacon of comportment but also despotic and defeated. The conqueror could not bestow mercy upon another victorious monarchy. It is Persia's defeat that allows it to be a perfect object for Alexander's (or Louis XIV's) clemency. The marks left by Darius's despotism and downfall are etched indelibly in the subjects of the painting, highlighting Louis XIV's compassion all the more. These characteristics particular to Persia reveal why Darius's queens are able to temper the conqueror's passions and bring out the merits of Louis XIV's reign.

Félibien also points to one final aspect of the Persian court that made it an ideal subject to serve Louis XIV's propagandistic goals: its diverse composition. Félibien describes the various foreign figures portrayed in the painting: "One represents a barbarian slave and the other a Greek woman."[127] Of the female, he notes, "We know the origin of this person by her pale complexion, and by the vividness of her coloring. Her action and looks testify that she understands Alexander's language; and because when in faraway places, one always has an inclination toward people from one's own country, we can easily see that she has a secret joy in seeing this prince."[128] Next to her, according to Félibien, is a slave. Félibien draws attention to an Egyptian priest, an Egyptian woman, and a Moorish woman, who are standing behind the Greek woman, and, under the tent, a Moorish soldier.[129] These foreign figures represent the different peoples that compose the Persian Empire and over whom Alexander ruled. Louis XIV, who desired to be a world monarch, projected himself as Alexander, who is admired and respected by people throughout the Orient. Through his reception of ambassadors from the Orient, Louis XIV could claim respect from monarchs from around the world and claim to be an emperor like Alexander.

Le Brun's painting of the Persian queens supplicating Alexander was the most celebrated work in his Alexander cycle. While it was hung in Versailles in the Salon de Mars, the other paintings were relegated to Gobelins, the royal tapestry factory, where the paintings were less accessible to the public view.[130] Soon after the completion of this painting, however, which put the French king on a par with the greatest figures of ancient times, Colbert and his group—called "the moderns"—deemed that Louis XIV and the French state had transcended the ancients, and therefore the Bourbon kingdom should be glorified based on its own accomplishments. To this end, they encouraged

artistic projects that glorified Louis XIV alone as Louis le Grand. [131] At the conclusion of his analysis of "The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander," Félibien echoes the idea that Louis XIV's reign outshone the ancients and that painters should focus on the French king's own glory:

> But, such a skilled paintbrush does not have to stop at honoring the Greek princes; they had their Apelles and their Zeuxis [two celebrated ancient Greek painters]. And since we are in a century in which France contributes such memorable things that, without a doubt, will be admired in the centuries to come; he must occupy himself with newer and more lasting subjects. Because we have the pleasure of being governed by a monarch who surpasses all the most renowned deeds of the ancient conquerors, could not this excellent painter make better use of his time from now on after this great work, and apply his rich talents to representing the great actions of Your Majesty and all the virtues that he [the king] possesses, giving us a painting that would become the most delightful object of our esteem.[132]

The new propaganda scheme of Louis XIV caused the perception of the "Persia" of Le Brun's first masterpiece to change. Persia, the rest of the "Orient," and other foreign places no longer served to glorify the virtues of Louis XIV through allusion to Alexander, but instead directly paid homage to the Sun King through diplomatic visits. Although the paintings lost their prominence, the "Queens of Persia" and the rest of the Alexander series remained an integral part of Louis' propaganda through the magnificent prints of the Cabinet du Roi. Thereby, the image of the Persians as a counterpart to Alexander's world, standing in for Louis XIV's France, would not be forgotten.

* * *

The representations of a civil and courtly Persia set up Persia as a mirror to France. André du Ryer fashioned his translation of *The Rose Garden* as a handbook on moral action and correct conduct; almost eighty years later Pétis de la Croix created Persian fairy tales that suggested a fantastic courtly world with French elements. Charles Le Brun painted another image of Persia, in which Darius's court drew out the princely virtues of Louis XIV, masked as Alexander. However, the Persia that appeared in *The Rose Garden, Mille et un jours*, and "The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander" projected an imaginary Persia that did not necessarily correspond to the contemporary realities of Safavid government or court life. Art and literature reimagined Persia to suit French expectations; yet, through diplomatic exchanges, French officials experienced aspects of Persian and "Oriental" court culture directly.

3

# Against All Odds

## *The Diplomatic Mission of Pierre-Victor Michel to Persia, 1706–1708*

Missionaries, travelers, and translators gave rise to Persia as a mirror to France, but this textual and intellectual comparison is only one aspect of the relationship. A study of the physical confrontation of diplomatic visits reveals another dimension of the mirror. Diplomatic visits brought Persian politics, dress, and habits into direct comparison with those of the French and serve as an ideal backdrop to the tensions inherent in defining the exotic.

As the War of the Spanish Succession raged in Europe, a French diplomatic mission led by an ambassador of dubious repute, Jean-Baptiste Fabre, and his ambitious mistress, Marie Petit, arrived on the outskirts of Persia in 1706 to negotiate commercial rights and obtain special protection for French missionaries in Persia. News of Fabre and Petit's scandalous behavior, which included accusations of gambling, drunkenness, and debauchery during their voyage to Persia, spread to Charles de Ferriol, the French ambassador in the Ottoman Empire, and eventually to Paris. Fabre died soon after his arrival and left his mistress, his entourage, and the presents destined for Shah Husayn somewhere in transit from the Ottoman Empire to Persia. Reports of Marie Petit's political aspirations and stunning usurpation of the leadership of the French mission circulated. Charles de Ferriol quickly appointed his secretary, Pierre-Victor Michel, to replace Fabre, take the lead role in the embassy, and return the brazen Marie Petit to France.

Michel's embassy plays a crucial role in the understanding of Persia as a "mirror" to France.[1] His story uncovers actual state encounters that formed a background to the French imaginings of Persia. His narrative captures how an envoy engaged on the ground in Persia negotiated French political interests. Michel's description of his practical experience serves as a comparison to French images of Persia used to aggrandize or criticize French society and politics. The reevaluation of Michel's embassy in the context of the larger picture of French representations of Persia also revises our view of Marie Petit's role. Petit actually helped shape Michel's image of Persia.

More broadly, the diplomatic quest shows how two states negotiated their interests and found common ground for diplomacy. Michel's story is not just an essential document of exchange between French and Persians but also integral to the study of East and

West, European and Asian ambassadors, and seventeenth-century international diplomacy.[2] Michel's treaty was a short-lived political victory in the history of French-Persian relations. In the end, Michel's work had little impact on politics, as the terms of the treaty were never seriously followed up by either the French or the Persians. Nevertheless, this chapter suggests that his diplomatic venture highlighted important parallels between France and Persia and made lasting impacts on representations of the far-flung players involved.[3]

Prior to his venture in Persia, Pierre-Victor Michel was, as noted, the secretary to the French resident ambassador in the Ottoman Empire. He was a young man from Marseille with little diplomatic experience except for a minor mission to a Hungarian prince.[4] His description of his journey to Persia, in which he disguised himself to dodge the hostile Ottoman authorities, reveals an ability to navigate his way through foreign territories. Yet the odds of succeeding where others had failed—at producing a treaty between France and Persia—were against him. Nevertheless, after two years in Persia, Michel arrived in the port of Marseille with a prize more valuable than any of the exotic treasures he might have carried: the first treaty between Persia and France.

Although the road to an official agreement over commercial rights and missionary privileges between the two monarchies was strewn with difficulties, the treaty marks a moment of diplomatic and political understanding between a European state and a foreign one.[5] In his memoirs, Michel makes few references to cultural difference and makes clear that his writings are not a travelogue about Persian habits and religion but about politics and purposes of state.[6] At times Michel readily accepts certain assumptions about Persian politics, such as political leaders who are easily seduced by women. Certainly Michel was aware of ideas that circulated in France about the harem, its vices, and its degenerating influence on the Persian monarchy. Yet overall Michel's descriptions rarely veer from politics and any associated political customs involved in his diplomatic quest.[7] Michel is more concerned with questioning the character of individuals in Persia who pose hurdles to his embassy than attributing problems to cultural distance between France and Persia. He does blame certain difficult negotiations on Persian pride, but only to emphasize the difficulty of his job and establish a scapegoat for potential failure.

Negotiations between Michel and his Persian hosts reflect a clear understanding of the political rewards and risks inherent in a treaty between France and Persia and an understanding that their interests were best served by compromise. Michel's story suggests that early modern ambassadorial visits posed problems, but these had less to do with cultural misunderstanding than with the difficulties of corresponding over long distances, local politics, and the influence of a war in Europe that had nothing to do with relations between France and Persia. Michel and Persian officials overcame these problems through a shared language of global diplomacy, that included credentials, ceremony, prestige, and negotiation.

Michel's manuscript documents international diplomacy through informative descriptions of his encounters. His record of his dramatic journey to assume his post as Fabre's successor and continue the French diplomatic mission highlights (and perhaps exaggerates) the complexity of his task and supports the contention that early modern missions faced peculiar odds. The early French ambassadors had no ongoing

relations with Persia and had to feel their way along, leaving them vulnerable to bizarre circumstances.

On arrival in Persia, Michel faced an unlikely but extremely ambitious and clever opponent: Marie Petit. Despite being a woman and an improbable candidate for an ambassadorship of any country, she had won support from local Persian political and religious leaders and assumed leadership of the French mission upon Fabre's death. Slow communication between Europe and Persia caused a great delay in the arrival of Michel's official credentials from Versailles, which advanced Petit's position. Michel's competition with Petit pushed him to focus on French intrigue instead of cultural difference. In his efforts to outwit Petit, Michel was forced to find practical ways of authenticating his position with Persian officials.

Second, Michel found that rivalries between Persian leaders endangered his mission and even his life, with threats of poison in his drinks. Persian leaders feared that the success of the French mission would mean the rise in power of some officials to the detriment of others, and perhaps the success of French Catholics who threatened the Armenian community with competition for conversion. His mission faced a third obstacle from France's enemies, the Dutch and the English, who not only were aligned against France in the War of the Spanish Succession in Europe but wanted to see France fail in any attempts to win commercial and religious interests in Persia. To overcome these obstacles and fulfill his mission, Michel relied on Catholic missionaries in Persia.

Michel's emphasis on politics over cultural difference suggests that when he looks at Persia he sees a reflection of aspects of the French political situation. He does not emphasize Persia's exoticness. Instead, he looks at Persia with French institutions in mind, and the similarities are projected back to him. Michel's negotiation is made possible by emphasizing parallels. He finds those connections in devices that are appreciated by both the Safavid and Bourbon monarchies, including acts of spectacle, proper credentials, and notions of royal prestige. Unlike other writers on Persia, such as Jean Chardin, Michel tends to not treat Persia as a comparison to France capable of projecting positive and negative associations to improve French politics and society. Nor is Michel concerned with evoking a polite Persia reminiscent of French elite culture. Instead, Michel's writings reveal two kingdoms that shared similar notions of monarchical precedence and could communicate through mutually comprehensible acts of diplomacy.

## Authenticating the French Ambassador

Under Louis XIII, France sent Louis Deshayes de Courmenin to negotiate commercial and missionary rights. French missionaries, such as Father Pacifique de Provins of the Capuchin order, acted as diplomats, but their attempts at establishing political ties between France and Persia resulted only in the exchange of friendly letters between the reigning monarchs.[8] During the reign of Louis XIV, France had few diplomatic and commercial interactions with Persia. Through the efforts of Jean-Baptiste Colbert and his successors, France tried to compete with the Dutch and English commercially, but without success.

Other than a few independent merchants, such as Jean Chardin and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, France was unable to launch commercial endeavors in Persia. Louis XIV

directed the state's resources toward the wars against Holland, Austria, and England instead of Colbert's commercial plans. In 1665, Louis XIV sent Nicolas Claude de Lalain, accompanied by François La Boullaye-le Gouz, to negotiate commercial privileges in Persia.[9] In 1700, Jean Billon de Canserilles, a merchant from Marseilles, made another attempt to diplomatically connect Persia and France. However, no concrete ties developed.[10]

The first conclusive contacts between France and Persia occurred during the last years of Louis XIV's reign when Jérome de Pontchartrain, secretary of state for the navy and commerce, took up Colbert's plans for French commercial expansion into Persia. Pontchartrain hoped to establish trade with Persia using the caravan route through the Ottoman Empire. He arranged the diplomatic mission of Jean-Baptiste Fabre, a man of debts and questionable character who came nevertheless from an extremely influential Marseillaise family.[11] Fabre's brother, Joseph Fabre, owned the pottery factory or *faïencerie* in Saint-Jean du Désert and was one of the largest cloth manufacturers in Marseille.[12] Fabre began planning for the visit to Persia upon receiving his appointment in November 1703 but did not depart until March 1705. He wished his visit to project the grandeur of Louis XIV's reign and concerned himself with collecting an impressive retinue. Fabre was accompanied by a large entourage that included his nephew Jacques Fabre.[13] However, also accompanying Fabre was an unlikely figure for an ambassadorial entourage, Marie Petit, who owned a game house in France and whom Michel would later accuse of sexual deviancy. Fabre not only was having an affair with Petit but had borrowed 8,000 livres from her.[14]

When Fabre arrived in Aleppo in April 1705, his mission was immediately put at risk, for he could not obtain authorization from the Ottoman vizir to cross the empire to Persia; the French consul in Aleppo had intervened against him. Apparently Charles de Ferriol, the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, thought Fabre unqualified for the post of ambassador to Persia and knew of Fabre's debts. Further, Ferriol was having an affair with Fabre's wife. Some, like Pontchartrain, blamed the near failure of Fabre's mission on Fabre's ostentatious display—he brought a large suite of more than fifty people to Aleppo. In a desperate attempt to rescue his mission from failure, he divided his entourage into smaller units. He instructed two men to bring the presents to the Persian border and hired an Armenian to conduct other members of his staff safely to Persia. Meanwhile, he crept into Constantinople and met with the Persian ambassador to the Ottomans, who snuck him into Persia.[15]

Fabre arrived in the city of Erivan (Yerevan in modern-day Armenia), the capital of the Persian province of Erivan, seat of the Persian governors of Erivan, and important point of entry into Persia via the Ottoman Empire.[16] In Erivan, Michel describes how Fabre arrogantly requested an outrageous allowance for himself of 600 livres a day, ten times the normal sum, and another for Petit of 100 livres per day. Further, he hired Father Léonard Mosnier, a Jesuit in Erivan, to work with him.[17] In 1706, while awaiting the appearance of the rest of his group and the presents for the shah, Fabre died suddenly. It would later be hypothesized that the governor of Erivan, Muhammad Khan, poisoned Fabre to prevent his court rival, the Persian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, from taking credit at court for any success of the French embassy.

Upon Fabre's death, his companion, Marie Petit, determined to take charge of the mission. Petit had accompanied Fabre across the Ottoman Empire and invested in the

mission by lending Fabre money. Petit wished a return on her investment and decided to continue with opportunities in Persia that the embassy offered.[18] Without the authority of the crown, Petit fabricated the story that she was a French envoy sent on behalf of the princesses of France and convinced the Persians in Erivan of it. Petit quickly won the support of the governor of Erivan and his circle.[19]

News of Fabre's death and Petit's scandalous impersonation of a French diplomat reached Charles de Ferriol, the French resident ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, who immediately sent his secretary, Pierre-Victor Michel, to end Petit's charade and return her to France.[20] Michel's memoirs recount his efforts to dispose of Petit, take his place as the rightful representative of the French, and finish the mission. He, however, faced the challenge not only of taking charge of the mission mid-journey but of also exposing Petit as a fake and proving his own precedence.

Michel's first and most difficult task stemmed from issues of diplomatic authentication and divisions within the Christian community in the East and had nothing to do with cultural differences between France and Persia. Michel, foremost, wished to challenge Marie Petit's strong support base in Erivan. His memoirs describe her as a loose woman who used sex to obtain the sponsorship of powerful men.[21]

Before Michel's arrival in Persia, Petit and the rest of the embassy members already had tangled with Persian authorities stirring scandal and concern. At a dinner, a fantastic fight over precedence had erupted between Marie Petit and one of Fabre's servants, named Justiniani. Michel sketches the story in his memoirs, but details are provided by other sources, such as the accounts later provided through the trial of Petit upon their return to France.[22] Justiniani removed the fruit basket even though Marie Petit had not been served. Petit, offended, threw an orange at Justiniani's head and the two exchanged insults. The servant called Petit a whore and brandished a knife. The governor of Erivan jailed Justiniani for his insult to Petit.

Father Léonard Mosnier, a Jesuit, wrote to his fellow missionaries about the predicament, and they responded by joining Mosnier in forcing the jail open and releasing Justiniani. Thereupon, they returned to the house where the embassy was staying. The Frenchmen refused the governor's requests to turn over Justiniani, and in response to this French defiance, the governor sent five hundred troops to the house where the Frenchmen lodged. The French and the Persians exchanged fire, killing two Persian soldiers. The governor jailed the Armenians and Frenchmen involved, including Mosnier. Marie Petit successfully rescued the French prisoners with bribes and her influence with the governor. However, she could not obtain the freedom of Justiniani and Father Mosnier. The governor's insistence on executing Mosnier finally broke when Petit threatened to follow him to the gallows. In place of the Jesuit, the governor beheaded two Armenians as payback for the death of the two Persian soldiers killed by the French.[23]

Although Petit secured the release of Mosnier and the other Frenchmen, French officials in the Ottoman Empire and Persia blamed Petit for the outrageous incident. Her anger over the fruit basket had resulted in a quarrel, and her alleged affair with the governor only escalated the tensions. During her trial concerning her conduct in Persia that took place upon her return to France, Petit argued against these accusations.[24] She testified that she never sacrificed her virtue and acted only to honor her country. She claimed that she actually saved the Frenchmen by pleading with the governor for their

release and drumming up a great sum of money to secure their freedom. Her intervention, she argued, served the French state and saved the Frenchmen from doom.[25] Nevertheless, Petit remained the scapegoat for the embassy's disintegration.

Petit's dispute has been overlooked by historians as a typical fight over precedence. Here, her frustration over the fruit basket is interpreted as an act to defend her honor. Petit acted against the deliberate slight performed by Justiniani through the refusal to serve her the fruit. However, the Frenchmen did not construe the fight as one over status. Instead, those around Petit interpreted her outburst as an indication of the danger she posed to diplomatic affairs and painted her as a temperamental woman concerned not with honor or precedence but with maintaining her status as the favorite of the governor of Erivan and his son. Based on her gender, members of the French embassy in Persia and missionaries automatically dismissed Petit from involvement in public displays of diplomatic honor and precedence.

Yet women indeed played an important role in early modern diplomacy. For example, in France, royal women such as Louise of Savoy and Marguerite of Navarre famously performed prestigious political and diplomatic duties, especially when the king, Francis I, was imprisoned.[26] Women also performed a notable diplomatic role from their so-called private quarters. Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV's last mistress and wife, mediated Spanish-French politics through her letters from Versailles to the Princess of Ursins at the Spanish court. [27] This correspondence, sanctioned by Louis XIV himself, provided a stream of inside information between the French and Spanish courts.[28]

Understanding of the informal roles of women as diplomatic players, such as Madame de Maintenon and the Princess of Ursins, has been made possible by research that has overturned the idea of a male-dominated and professionalized diplomatic sphere.[29] Yet, unlike Madame de Maintenon, Marie Petit carved out for herself a public role that straddled a line between public and private that most women in diplomacy could not cross. Marie Petit claimed to be "official," but not on behalf of the king. Her legitimacy would be too easily challenged if she attempted to validate her status by using Louis XIV's name, as it would have been unlikely for the king to select a female ambassador to Persia. Instead, Petit tried to appear more credible by declaring herself to come from the intimate circle of the princesses of France, claiming an official status that stemmed from the private world of females at Louis XIV's court.[30]

Marie Petit's brazen declaration of a legitimate diplomatic role sanctioned by the court challenged the generally accepted role women played in diplomacy. Seventeenth-century theorists excluded women from diplomatic engagement: Jean Bodin proclaimed women unsuitable for the political world, and Abraham van Wicquefort, in his seminal seventeenth-century reference book on European diplomacy, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, wrote, "The word Legatus is Masculine, and the same Laws that prohibit Women the Exercise of publick offices, debar 'em also of this Employ, which Men of the greatest Ability have much ado to discharge worthily."[31] Francois Callières, author of *On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes*, also warned of the dangers of women in the diplomatic arena despite their actual success.[32]

Voltaire and van Wicquefort shared the opinion that Madame de Guilleragues, who tried to succeed her husband as ambassador in Istanbul after he died in 1685, stood out as the only female ambassador, despite the existence of numerous other examples.[33] It is noteworthy that writers praised Guilleragues for her public participation while French

officials slandered Marie Petit despite the similarity of their predicaments. Both women had to beat male rivals to gain the diplomatic post. Yet we can hypothesize several important differences that distinguished Madame de Guilleragues from Petit and made the former more acceptable in the diplomatic world. In contrast to Petit, Guilleragues humbly acknowledged women as not fit for diplomatic engagement, and perhaps her admission of female weakness softened male opinion toward her. Further, Guilleragues was a legitimate wife of the deceased ambassador. Marie Petit, on the other hand, was a mistress.

Diplomatic circles in the Ottoman Empire and France assumed that Petit was an impediment to improved French-Persian relations. Historians have pointed out that contemporaries unfairly vilified Petit as promiscuous, even as no one pointed to the adultery of male figures such as Fabre, who was known for his extramarital affairs.[34] On the other hand, it was Petit's alignment with religious adversaries of the Catholic missionaries, such as Imam Quli Beg, who had persecuted Catholics, that irreparably damaged any claims she had to diplomatic legitimacy.

The diplomatic goals of the embassy included trade concessions for Frenchmen but also an increase in rights for French Catholic missionaries.[35] After Fabre's death, Petit continued the mission with the support of Gregorian Armenians who challenged the presence of the French missionaries in Persia. Divisions within the Christian community in Persia had persisted since the reign of Shah Abbas I, who had granted the European Catholics the right to set up missions and proselytize to Armenians. The Armenian community was divided between members of the Gregorian Church, whose clergy saw the European Catholics as a threat for trying to convert their adherents, and the Armenian Catholics, who supported the foreign missionaries.[36] Petit's decision to join the Gregorian Armenians sealed her fate as an obstruction to French-Persian relations.

Michel's superior in the Ottoman consulate, Ferriol, who at the time was distressed over the religious divisions within the Ottoman Empire, directed Michel to end Petit's illegitimate mission before it went too far.[37] However, when Michel finally arrived in Erivan, he discovered that Petit was already on her way to the Persian capital with the French entourage. Michel suspected that she intentionally had advanced her departure once she found out a successor was on his way to replace her. He believed she counted on her successor's long and treacherous voyage across the Ottoman lands and thought she could arrive at the shah's court before the envoy even set foot in Persia. Michel's memoirs even allege that Petit went so far as to have the governor of Erivan, her devoted admirer, detain Michel in Erivan to buy Petit more time.[38] Determined to overcome Petit, Michel pursued her, but he found other practical barriers to a diplomatic treaty: the Safavid Empire would challenge Michel to verify his diplomatic identity and would make him delve into the world of local political leaders.

## Acquiring Knowledge of Local Politics: The Aid of French Missionaries

Michel's memoirs emphasize the importance of Catholic missionary networks to the execution of his diplomatic orders. Missionaries served as a diplomatic and information

network for the French in Persia in lieu of resident embassies.[39] The Catholic priests offered Michel a window into Persia, and the image they presented was one of an empire divided among provincial governors. Chardin had described the relentless competition between local leaders for royal recognition and favors during the reign of Shah Suleiman.[40] During the reign of Shah Husayn, strong royal authority further diminished, allowing unchecked ruthless competition among provincial and court rivals.[41] Michel's text, unlike Chardin's, was not concerned with analyzing Safavid politics and culture. Instead, he acquired practical inside knowledge of local political leaders from clerics and learned the necessity of impressing his identity upon select elites. Missionaries' advice helped Michel navigate through the everyday political world of the Safavids.

Upon Fabre's death, some of the Frenchmen in the delegation thought to name Fabre's nephew Jacques, or Fabre's young son of around fourteen years of age, Joseph (who had joined the embassy mid-journey), to take the post of ambassador. Father Mosnier considered the problem of the leaderless French diplomatic mission and sought out Louis-Marie Pidou de Saint Olon, the bishop of Babylon, who had been appointed to the see in 1687, to temporarily take over the mission.[42] According to Michel, the French government in Paris, who had appointed Fabre as ambassador, named Saint Olon as his successor in the event of Fabre's death.[43]

While Mosnier awaited instructions from the Persian court and a response from Saint Olon, Petit worked to move the delegation closer to the Safavid capital in Isfahan under her supervision. She took control of the entire embassy, including the presents for the shah, and procured letters of recommendation addressed to the governor of Tabriz, as well as an interpreter, Imam Quli Beg, an Armenian disliked by French missionaries and by the French government for his dishonest schemes in the Ottoman Empire, France, and Persia and for his persecution of Armenian Catholics.[44] But, Michel reports, Mosnier and the other Frenchmen followed Petit's lead, out of fear of offending her and the governor.[45] Young Joseph Fabre was named envoy alongside Petit. When Michel arrived outside Erivan he immediately tried to contact Mosnier, who he learned had left with Petit en route to Tabriz, closer to the Persian capital.

Following closely behind, Michel soon caught up with the French Jesuit and the rest of the mission in Nakhichivan, a town on the way to Tabriz. His interpreter, posing as an Armenian priest, visited the house where the embassy lodged and informed Father Mosnier of his presence. In secret, Michel sought Mosnier's advice concerning the state of affairs with Petit, specifically whether the French entourage would accept him as Fabre's rightful successor or whether they would choose to remain loyal to Petit. Mosnier and the rest of the French entourage welcomed him with what Michel describes as "joy" and accepted him as their legitimate leader.[46]

Saint Olon sealed Michel's approval with a message in which he recognized Michel as the leader of the mission. However, he warned Michel that he could not officially take leadership from Petit, nor could he arrest her as long as the governor of Erivan protected her.[47] With that advice, Michel announced that he would leave the mission for the time being and meet up with them again later on their route. He decided to go to Tabriz to discuss with the father superior of the Capuchins, Father d'Issoudun, how best to deal with Petit and the governor.[48]

Michel would not have been able to continue his journey and fight for the leadership of his mission without the help of the Jesuit Mosnier and the Capuchin d'Issoudun in

Tabriz.[49] Michel's lack of experience dealing with Persian local leaders is apparent in his story, as he lingered unnoticed in Persia. D'Issoudun impressed upon Michel the necessity of acquiring the approval of the governor of Tabriz, who had already received favorable letters recommending Petit from Erivan. In Tabriz, Michel wrote letters to the shah's court explaining that he had orders to arrest Petit. However, these notes never arrived at their destination. Thirty-five days after he sent them off, he discovered that the messenger had been robbed a few days into his journey.[50]

Michel continued to write to the court without getting a response, but finally received some attention thanks to D'Issoudun. The missionaries understood the chain of command in Persia and how to receive attention from the court and local political leaders, and D'Issoudun instructed Michel to proclaim to the governor of Tabriz that he indeed was the authorized successor to Fabre's French embassy. D'Issoudun explained that no one would take Michel seriously unless he presented himself as a diplomat to the right authorities. This declaration of his status was the only way to challenge Petit.

In his memoirs, Michel describes how the Capuchin father approached the governor of Tabriz about Michel's position. According to Michel's writings, the governor, confused, asked if Michel was the same envoy whom the governor of Erivan had sent on his way with "the daughter of the king of France"—namely, Petit.[51] D'Issoudun explained that "the envoy whom he was speaking about [Joseph Fabre] was the son of the ambassador who died in Erivan, and he was completely incapable. The king's daughter he spoke of was a debauched woman who was engaged as a servant to wash the clothes of the ambassador Fabre."[52]

The governor, stunned by this news, responded skeptically that he would have to meet this son of Fabre for himself and see if he confirmed Michel as his father's successor. He added that nevertheless he had to follow orders from the governor of Erivan to send Petit on her way to the shah, and there was nothing he could do to alter that.[53] The governor of Tabriz feared the power of the governor of Erivan, who held a higher rank, called *beglerbegi*, given to the governors of the more important provinces.[54] Although Michel was still in the same predicament of having to prove his status, he had at least begun an indirect dialogue with the governor of Tabriz thanks to the assistance provided by the Capuchin order.

Michel shows how the missionaries provided inside political information necessary to the success of the diplomatic mission. They helped Michel correspond with Persian provincial governors as well as high-ranking court officials. Without missionary assistance, Michel never could have reached Isfahan. In the end, the missionaries' practical knowledge of Persia served him better than images of Persia from travel literature, tales, and translations. Michel saw a potential diplomatic partner for France that could be reached through diplomatic devices and networks of communication supplied by missionaries.

## The Problem of Identity and the *Lettres de Créance*

In his writings, Michel continues to narrate his troubles with little, if any, reference to cultural differences between himself and the Persians he encountered. In fact, Michel did not see his setbacks as insurmountable but continued to navigate Persian local

politics and find ways to thwart Petit's competition. In Persia, Michel found an empire that mirrored his own, and the hindrances he encountered were practical ones that a Frenchmen such as he could weather. The heart of Michel's task was to establish his identity through diplomatic signs that both the French and the Safavids recognized.

Through the missionaries, Michel began to secretly communicate with Fabre's son Joseph, who was still with Petit and the rest of the mission. Joseph and Michel arranged for Michel's takeover of the French delegation, still on its way to Tabriz. Four days after Michel's arrival in Tabriz, Joseph arrived and showed his approval of Michel by heading to the Capuchin mission to join him. Together, they entered the house that had been prepared for the French embassy by the Persians and where the remaining members of the mission were waiting to accept Michel. In this way young Joseph Fabre and the rest of the entourage staged their approval of Michel publicly for the governor of Tabriz; they knew his spies were watching the house to observe how the French delegation received Michel.[55] Michel's reception was a universal diplomatic signal of Michel's legitimacy that the Persians understood.

However, Marie Petit was not too far behind Joseph, riding with the presents destined for the shah. Michel writes, "Knowing what kind of woman she was and the orders that I might have had [against her], she didn't dare reside in the house prepared [for the embassy]."[56] But upon hearing word of Michel's arrival and residence in the diplomatic house, she took swift action. The following day, Michel discovered that Marie had already damaged his reputation. When he requested an audience with the governor of Tabriz, he found that the governor was suddenly indisposed. "Marie," alleges Michel, "had sent a messenger [Imam Quli Beg], a man given to her by the governor of Erivan, to warn [the governor of Tabriz] that I was not [officially] dispatched and I had taken the young Fabre and the other Frenchmen by surprise; that the king of France could not possibly have learned about the death of Fabre and sent me to Persia to take his place, and further that I had come to Tabriz without a retinue, like a merchant, and that I had not passed through Erivan, where everyone who passes through Persia must stop to see its governor." Michel adds, "The man who delivered the message was a scoundrel who thought he could make his fortune with this woman and added a thousand additional foolish remarks."[57] The following day, Michel felt the effects of the courier's message through a cold reception by the Governor of Tabriz: "The first thing he asked was to see my *lettres de créance* [credentials] and repeated Petit's charges against me, and to show the messenger who was present at this audience . . . his desire to please the Beglerbegi, governor of Erivan."[58]

Michel did not yet have official *lettres de créance* from Louis XIV, as he had come not directly from Versailles but from the French embassy in Constantinople under the orders of the resident ambassador, Ferriol. The arrival of his credentials from the monarchy at Versailles would take a long time, as travel between France and Persia could be slow and dangerous.[59]

The *lettres de créance*, stamped with the authority of the monarch, were crucial to ambassadorial visits in and outside of Europe. "The *lettres de créance*," Abraham van Wicquefort wrote, "are necessary to the ambassador, both because it assigns him his role and signals it to the prince to whom he is sent and because without them he is unable to negotiate."[60] When these credentials were unavailable, common practice called for another method of identification: "It is necessary that he [the ambassador] brings another

tool, power, proxy, message of authority to act, [or] passport" that would explain the ambassador's status and, in turn, the honors he deserved.[61]

The identity of the ambassador was all the more difficult to discern in embassies between Europe and Asia, and clashes over credentials often arose. Michel's concerns over his *lettres de créance* were set within a long-standing history of disputes over documents that had occurred in embassies from non-European countries to France. During the 1668 visit of the Muscovite ambassador Pierre Joannides Potemkin to France, the issue of his credentials arose. Nicolas de Sainctot describes how "the Sieur de Berlise, *introducteur des ambassadeurs*, complimented the ambassador on behalf of the king and asked him for his *lettres de créance*."[62] Insulted, the ambassador responded that he had no letter other than the one given to him by the czar, and that he had been ordered to hand that royal note to no one other than the king himself. Instead of the letter, the Muscovite offered the *introducteur* his passport, which served to identify him as holding the rank of ambassador.[63]

The following year, another incident occurred when the Ottoman Empire failed to recognize French precedence over Spain. An insulted Louis XIV recalled the French ambassador in the Ottoman capitol without selecting a replacement. The prospect of having no French representative in the Ottoman Empire caused the grand vizir to detain the departing French ambassador and send an envoy, the *muteferrika* Suleiman Aga, to Louis XIV to revive relations with France and request a substitute French ambassador.[64]

From the moment the Turkish diplomat arrived on French soil on August 4, 1669, the key question nagging at Louis XIV and his officials was the foreigner's precise status—knowledge necessary to plan the ceremonial events to honor the visitor. Unclear as to whether being a *muteferrika* meant he was only a low-ranking envoy or an ambassador deserving of the highest honors, Louis XIV sent Sieur de la Gibertie, a *gentilhomme ordinaire*, to meet Suleiman Aga at Toulon, his entry point into France, with the precise mission of discovering the Turkish diplomat's ranking while escorting him to Paris.[65] Suleiman Aga referred to himself as an ambassador, and his interpreter confirmed that the letters the diplomat carried validated this. However, the Turkish visitor refused to reveal the actual contents of his documents to Gibertie, raising the Frenchman's suspicions as to his true rank, suspicions that were already heightened by the foreigner's lack of presents for Louis XIV and his less-than-extraordinary entourage.[66] Choosing to trust Suleiman Aga's claim to ambassadorial status, Gibertie arranged for a ceremonial entry into Toulon, reserved only for ambassadors of the highest station.

During preparations for the ambassador's entry into Paris and his royal audience, concerns as to his true stature mounted. Louis XIV had to be certain how to receive the Turkish visitor. If he honored Suleiman Aga more than his rank deserved and received him with higher respects than the Ottomans would a Frenchman of similar stature, the king risked lowering himself in comparison to the sultan.

Another clash between French and Ottoman diplomatic custom occurred over the *lettres de créance* during Suleiman Aga's audience with Louis XIV. The Turkish dignitary wished to hand his credentials directly to the king. However, this conflicted with French protocol: "Suleiman said to His Majesty that the Grand Seigneur [the sultan], his master, commanded him to place the letter only in the hands of His Majesty. He pleaded with him to perform this honor and His Majesty granted him that."[67]

While the king agreed to accept the letter by his own hand, the Turkish diplomat requested another alteration of French ceremony. "Suleiman went up the steps of the throne while holding the letter. At the last step, seeing that His Majesty did not rise to receive it, he said that when the Grand Seigneur, his master, gave him the letter, he stood up in a sign of respect and friendship for His Majesty, to whom he appealed to accept it in the same manner by which it had been given to him."[68]

Suleiman wished the letter to receive the highest honor from the French monarch. In turn, the king desired to give the same respect to the letter as the sultan gave to the French notes when they appeared at the Ottoman court. "The king, in that moment, turned toward the Sieur de Guitry . . . who at an earlier time was in the Ottoman Empire at the audience of M. de la Haye, and asked him if the Grand Seigneur [sultan] had stood when his ambassador had given him his letter. The Sieur de Guitry replied, no; the king said out loud that since the Grand Seigneur does not stand upon receiving his letters from the hands of his ambassadors, he would not stand either."[69]

Suleiman proceeded to bow and hand the letter to the king, who took it and handed it off to Hughes de Lionne, the French secretary of foreign affairs. "Suleiman descended the steps at the bottom of the throne after having made a bow, where he shook his head and said out loud that the Grand Seigneur [sultan] would not be satisfied by the manner in which the king received his letter; His Majesty perceived this angry act and asked what he had said, and after someone explained it to him, he [the king] announced in a serious tone that he would look at the letter and give a response."[70] Suleiman went even further in his insolence by turning his back on Louis XIV upon leaving. Later, the Turkish visitor regretted his disrespect, declaring that he "was in such a state of despair of having displeased His Majesty that he was in a position to ask his forgiveness publicly, but the king responded that satisfaction would not augment nor diminish his glory after the act was done."[71]

The disputes over Suleiman's rank and the *lettres de créance* exemplify the impediments that arose during Oriental embassies to France. Both the Ottomans and the French found it difficult to accommodate a foreign diplomatic culture without risking the appearance of subordination to them. Suleiman Aga's resistance to French ceremony and slight to the king at the audience embarrassed the French monarchy and angered the king to such an extent that he personally requested Molière and Lully to poke fun at Suleiman Aga in the play *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.[72] The character of M. Jourdain, who rises from an ordinary draper to the high stature of *mamamouchi*, parodies Suleiman's attempt to rise from mere envoy to ambassador.[73] Ironically, while the French believed that he was really only an envoy, in Ottoman diplomacy a *muteferrika* was used for high-ranking diplomatic visits, and the Turks made no differentiation between an ambassador and an envoy.[74]

By the late seventeenth century, a better understanding of the status of Oriental ambassadors became more commonplace. Chardin's *Travels*, for instance, emphasized the lack of ranks among Oriental ambassadors.[75] This knowledge, reinforced by travel literature, was acquired through the practice of diplomatic encounters. Yet grumblings about the identity of ambassadors continued. The ceremonial difficulties that emerged over status and the handling of the *lettres de créance* resulted in an amusing scene in one of Molière's most popular plays. But it also reflects the serious nature of seemingly minor matters of protocol for relations between Europe and Asia.[76]

Molière's theatrics aside, Michel's mission shows that French diplomats abroad also faced suspicions regarding their identity. Michel not only had to prove his own status but also had to refute Marie Petit's claim to be the envoy of the French princesses. Michel only had letters from the French Ottoman ambassador, which were not as significant as the illustrious *lettres de créance* that symbolized the power of the king abroad. The credentials from the king were packaged in gold and ornate fabrics, which gave them a royal aura and granted the ambassador an aspect of the royal authority, which allowed him to negotiate as a representative of the king.[77] Through the seventeenth century, Europeans knew the value of diplomatic credentials in Asia and had worked hard to impress the Safavids with their documents. Franck Birkenholz describes the efforts of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to impress the Safavids with the papers of their ambassador, Joan Cunaeus, in 1651. The credentials, in particular, praised Cunaeus's status in order to show that he was worthy of an audience with the shah.[78]

Marie Petit's behavior confirms that the value of these letters was well known, for she, with no diplomatic experience, knew of their influence and used her knowledge of them to refute Michel's accusations. She later testified that missionaries such as Saint Olon had advised Michel not to pursue a meeting with the shah until his proper credentials had arrived. She noted that by ignoring this advice, Michel had jeopardized the mission and damaged the image of France when the Safavid court rejected his requests for an audience, believing he was a fake who lacked identification. Marie Petit's criticism of Michel is correct insofar as he failed to be given a royal meeting until the arrival of his credentials.[79]

Ambassadors used other tools to demonstrate their status. Parades, large entourages, and expensive presents imparted legitimacy to a diplomatic mission.[80] Diplomats worked hard to ensure that their entry into a country would call attention to themselves, dispel any questions of legality, and boost their capacity for negotiation.[81] Foreigners visiting the Safavid Empire understood that the Persian crown received only those visits that were accompanied by presents deemed suitable to honor the shah. The presents, like the credentials, legitimized foreign envoys but at the same time reflected the submission of the visitors to the shah. The presents represented a form of tribute paid to the shah, for which in return he granted his patronage.[82]

Fabre is just one example of an ambassador who put great effort into preparing a grand entourage and collecting costly presents. Nearly a decade later, Louis XIV's court used engravings and journal entries to spin tales of the opulent retinue and presents that accompanied the Persian ambassador to France in 1715.[83] Petit played up Michel's lack of an entourage and presents, which further weakened his claim to diplomatic status. Petit also had a stronger claim to legitimacy because she had marched with Fabre's entourage and entered Tabriz with the royal presents. Upon her return to France, Marie Petit defended herself with claims that the Persians naturally accepted her as the head of the mission, as she possessed the presents and the large entourage. Petit understood the symbolism inherent in diplomatic gifts and the power that they bestowed on an envoy.

## Unraveling Domestic Persian Politics

Michel's memoirs point to another hurdle for ambassadors abroad. The diplomat's mission depended on the support of local leaders, who could help or prevent them from

ever arriving at court. Knowledge of domestic politics was necessary to win support of those influential at court. Michel's battle to replace Petit as the rightful envoy of France proved to be a game of winning support from key Persian leaders and understanding their domestic political plots and conspiracies.

According to Michel, Marie already had an advantage: the governor of Erivan and his son were attracted to her. Michel had to win over the governor of Tabriz; otherwise, he suspected, he would be returned to Erivan while Petit made haste to the shah's court. In his memoirs, Michel praises himself for his quick thinking and firm response to the governor. Michel explained to the governor that the king of France had learned of Fabre's scandalous relationship with Petit and responded by sending Michel to replace him. Michel also stated that he must show his *lettres de créance* to the Persian court before anyone else. He explained that he had come "on foot, masked as a shepherd," and bypassed Erivan to join the French embassy more quickly; a stop in Erivan would have unnecessarily delayed him. Michel was persuasive: the governor of Tabriz sent a representative to apologize for the difficulty he had suffered, and then finally authorized Michel's journey to the royal court.[84]

Nevertheless, Marie Petit continued to create difficulty for Michel and maintain the support of a powerful leader: the governor of Erivan. As Michel departed Tabriz for Qazvin, where the Persian court could be found, new letters of recommendation claiming Petit as the true emissary reached Tabriz from Erivan. Powerful figures from Tabriz's political elite supported Petit and forced the governor of Tabriz to allow Petit to continue her journey despite promises made to Michel.

Before Petit could reach Qazvin, Michel sent a letter to the shah's court announcing his arrival in Qazvin and giving a warning that the king of France had sent orders for Petit's arrest. The court responded favorably to Michel, advising him to await the shah in Qazvin, where Petit could also be cross-examined. Next, Michel persuaded the vizir of Qazvin of his ambassadorial status and his orders to arrest Petit. The vizir departed for the shah's court, where he promised to relay Michel's appeal for support. The situation seemed to be turning in Michel's favor. But his hopes were soon dashed when he discovered that the governor of Erivan had sent presents to the shah's court to secure Petit's position and Michel's own dismissal, and that the first minister, under the influence of the governor of Erivan, refused to receive the vizir of Qazvin at the court.[85]

Up to this moment, Michel had blamed the governor of Erivan's enchantment with Petit for his problems. Like his French readers, who through travel literature were well aware of the debauchery of the harem and the influence women could have on politics, Michel had relied on the assumption that Petit seduced the governor of Erivan into supporting her as the head of the embassy. But he learned from a chancellor that the governor and his nephew, who was the shah's first minister, had other motives to prevent Michel from reaching the court.

Michel had failed to consider the ubiquitous intrigue and competition among officials in the late Safavid period.[86] It turned out that the Persian ambassador who had snuck Jean-Baptiste Fabre into Persia from the Ottoman Empire was, as described by Michel, "an irreconcilable enemy of the first minister to the shah and the governor [of Erivan]."[87] The governor of Erivan feared that if Fabre reached the court, he would praise the Persian ambassador and help that ambassador take the coveted title of *beglerbegi* from the governor. So the governor wrote to the shah that Fabre was nothing more than

a simple merchant from Constantinople. However, the shah conferred with his ambassador, who verified that Fabre carried authentic diplomatic credentials and presented all the other markings of a true emissary. Furthermore, the ambassador offered to sacrifice his own head to the shah if he had incorrectly discerned Fabre's status.

The governor soon received a surprising message from the shah to send Fabre to his court, where his status could be verified. Fearing the ruin of his reputation and the loss of his title to the ambassador, the governor invited Fabre to a hunting party, during which he had him poisoned. The governor also had to eliminate or discredit Fabre's replacement, Michel. The missionaries had warned Michel about possible attempts on his life and to watch out for poisonous drinks, like the one that was rumored to have killed Fabre. Having missed his chance to poison Michel in Erivan, the governor had to depend upon his nephew, the first minister, to keep Michel from reaching the shah's court, where Michel might reveal Fabre's true ambassadorial status and cause the governor tremendous humiliation.[88]

Although Michel eventually learned he had been wrong in thinking the governor of Erivan had been controlled by love for a woman, he did not revise his position on Marie Petit and continued to vilify her.[89] After all, a woman had invaded the diplomatic sphere and transgressed diplomatic norms in which women had no official defined role.

But Michel's story reveals that the governor of Erivan, in league with his relatives at the shah's court, had intrigued to keep the French embassy from succeeding by supporting the least convincing diplomatic player, Marie Petit. A woman would have been a weak candidate to negotiate a treaty between the two monarchies. Frenchmen in Persia, such as the Catholic missionaries, did not support Petit's leadership of the embassy, and this would have prevented her from negotiating any diplomatic agreement.

Even more importantly, a female representative of the French monarchy would have had little chance of being taken seriously by the Persian court. Women in the Islamic world have traditionally been viewed as powerless subjects confined to the world of the harem. However, recently historians have shown that women in Islamic society had channels between the public and private sphere that allowed them to exercise power.[90] As Leslie Pierce has shown, even the confining institution of the harem offered women avenues of influence.[91] Kathryn Babayan explains that women during the early Safavid period not only influenced politics but were legitimate heirs to the throne. Like their brothers, princesses were sometimes blinded to prevent them from taking the throne.[92] In stark contrast to France, where women were barred from the throne through the Salic law, Safavid women had the potential to reign and wield power over the royal court. The example of Pari Khan Khanum, the daughter of Shah Tahmasp, shows women's prominent position in early Safavid politics. Pari Khan Khanum controlled Safavid politics after her father's death and plotted the succession of one of her brothers.[93]

Michel arrived in Persia during the reign of the last Safavid ruler, Shah Husayn. By the time of Husayn, Safavid culture had completed its shift from the tribal political culture upon which the dynasty had been founded to an emphasis on Imami Shiism, which better served state centralization. Women did find means of exercising independence and choice despite the rise in orthodoxy that favored patriarchy. But a further challenge for women came with a decree issued under Shah Husayn in 1694–96 that, for example, prohibited drinking and other unorthodox pleasure and also restricted women from most public activity without the accompaniment or permission of their husband.[94] Even

so, women still could have formidable power at court, as exemplified by Maryam Bigum, the daughter of Shah Safi and Shah Husayn's great-aunt, who promoted Husayn's succession and also ended a revolt within the court against him in 1717. She is thought to have persuaded the shah to pursue Afghan invaders.[95]

Despite the examples of powerful women such as Bigum, women in the late Safavid period had a more restricted public existence. A female envoy, even one posing as the representative of the princesses of France, had little chance of succeeding at achieving any diplomatic negotiations outside harem and court politics. Clearly, the Persian ministers and governors who supported Marie Petit did not take a relationship between France and Persia seriously. Instead, Safavid figures, like the governor of Erivan, valued their personal reputation in the Persian court and their ambition above all. For these men, France did not rank high in political importance. The kingdom of France clearly took a backseat to court rivalries.

Upon Petit's return to France and her subsequent trial, her lawyer put forth her story that she was entertained at the royal court at Qazvin.[96] According to the account, she was received with the highest honors, met the shah, and was escorted to the harem to meet the shah's wives. She was also granted a sum of money from the court to cover her travels and instructed to return to Erivan, where she would receive additional income.[97]

Petit's story sounds familiar when compared to accounts by other diplomatic women, such as Lady Mary Montagu, who accompanied her husband on his diplomatic mission to Istanbul in 1717, and Elizabeth Marsh, an English woman of modest origins who published an account of her experiences as prisoner and guest of the sultan of Morocco in the early eighteenth century. Both Montagu and Marsh were entertained by the royal court and described their visits to the harem.[98] Like these women, Marie Petit could boast of having entered a space forbidden to men. However, Petit's defense featured little about actual negotiations with the Safavid court over the diplomatic issues that attracted France and Persia to each other.

Petit's report shows that the Persian court was willing to entertain her and, perhaps, show respect to her supporters, such as the governor of Erivan. However, the Safavids were not willing to negotiate diplomatic terms at great length with Petit. After her meeting with the shah she returned to Tabriz, where the governor of Tabriz ordered her to leave Persia.[99] On her way home, Petit was entertained by the court of the Georgian regent, Vakhtang VI, an imprisoned vassal of the shah of Persia who sought aid from Louis XIV. Vakhtang sent messages to the French crown via Petit, a woman, in a desperate attempt to procure his freedom.[100]

## Asserting French Power and Precedence in Persia

Maneuvering through missionary and Persian political circles, Michel eventually swayed the court in his favor and rid himself of Marie Petit. But Michel was still unable to achieve a meeting with the Safavid court without his *lettres de créance*.

After his meeting with the governor of Tabriz, Michel made further attempts to achieve an audience at the Safavid court in Qazvin but was rebuffed. Part of the reason, as he would later learn, had to do with European competitors such as the Dutch and the English, who did not wish to see French commercial expansion in Persia. In any case,

he returned to Tabriz, where he would meet Marie Petit for the last time in Persia. She left Tabriz on July 8, 1707. Michel, still without formal credentials, ended up waiting in Erivan, where he reconciled with the governor of Erivan and the two men agreed on certain concessions for missionaries in Erivan.[101]

It was the arrival of his *lettres de créance* from the palace of Versailles that settled the issue of the authenticity of Michel's mission and silenced his enemies, opening the possibility of meeting with the royal court. "The letter," writes Michel, "[was] the necessary piece to give me the force to overcome the obstacles sprung from our enemies."[102] The credentials reached Michel in Erivan on March 1708, more than a year after he had arrived in Persia in December 1706.[103] Michel now officially embarked on negotiations for the first treaty between France and Persia.

A dialogue over prestige marked the steps toward an agreement between France and Persia. In a fashion similar to the diplomatic parades of Europe, Michel made a spectacular entry into the Safavid capital, Isfahan. Michel boasted a cortege of nearly three hundred people and claimed that number would have been larger if his fellow Europeans—the English, Dutch, and Portuguese—had not been prevented from joining due to the War of the Spanish Succession.[104] "Everyone admitted that my entry was the most beautiful that they had ever seen in Isfahan," he brags. "I did not spare anything to mark the grandeur of the most powerful Christian monarch in the capital of the Persian Empire."[105] The French entry into Isfahan exhibited the power and splendor of France to the Safavids just as the entry of Mohammad Reza Beg in Paris years later would showcase Persian majesty in France.

The Safavids, like the Bourbons, appealed to their subjects through public displays of grandeur.[106] In turn, visitors to both France and Persia were expected to honor the respective monarchs with magnificent displays. Like the French, European merchants from the Netherlands and England understood the pomp expected by the Safavid monarchy. Magnificent presents and entries showcased the "might of the prince and the grandeur of his nation," which were judged by the "expenses of his ambassador."[107]

The shah received Michel in a room decorated with mirrors, coincidentally echoing Versailles's own Hall of Mirrors. The shah was seated on an elevated platform, and he was wearing a magnificent outfit. "His Majesty . . . had a crimson turban . . . [and] a suit of red satin with diamond buttons," writes Michel.[108] The shah's first officers sported "suits of gold and silver cloth, with large feathered hats embedded with pearls and diamonds."[109]

Both Persia and France participated in the demonstration of power through a show of pomp and luxury. Both states participated in the language of the theater-state described by Clifford Geertz and the symbolism of power embedded in the physical presence of the monarch himself.[110] Display and ceremony transcended national boundaries and played a role in establishing an early international diplomatic order.

Taking precedence seriously, Michel carefully gauged how the Persians accommodated him, especially as compared to how the Persians accommodated the English and Dutch ambassadors at the Persian court. In particular, Michel complained bitterly about the manner in which he was served during dinner with the first minister.[111] Michel was served dinner on porcelain plates. Insulted, he would not touch a thing served to him. When the first minister noticed, Michel announced that it didn't suit him to eat off earthenware when his Dutch guests had been served their food on gold plates. Michel grumbles, "A first minister like him should have known the manner to

receive an ambassador of France and that he should not have overlooked the difference that existed between the emperor of France and the United Provinces."[112] According to Michel, the first minster denied any intentional insult and responded that he would have served Michel's meal with two hundred gold dishes if he had known.

Michel mistrusted the first minister's defense of naiveté on the subject of the dishes. His incredulity rings correct: insults to ceremony and precedence held significance in Persia as well as in France.[113] At the Safavid court, much as in Louis XIV's court, foreign diplomats could hamper or even ruin negotiations if court rituals were not followed correctly, as happened with the Turkish embassy to France in 1699.[114] For their visits to Persia, the French claimed prestige over the Dutch as a monarchy and expected to be treated according to their precedence. Other French diplomats before Michel had bragged about French preeminence over other Europeans. Chardin recorded that Nicolas Claude Lalain in 1665 was received before other European delegates.[115] Michel followed the expectation that a monarchy like France should be treated with precedence.

## European Rivalries in Persia: The Dutch and the English

After further interviews, the reasons behind Michel's unfavorable treatment by the first minister became clearer. Other Europeans in Persia wished to preserve their trading privileges there and prevent France from acquiring any rights. The Dutch, English and Portuguese had paid a considerable sum to the first minister and other court officials to ensure that the French envoy never appeared at court.[116] Further, Michel later learned from local missionaries that the English had done everything in their power to derail the French mission. They repeatedly ridiculed Michel as a charlatan to the first minister. The English also proclaimed France a loser in the war in Europe and accused the French of tricking the Persians by booming celebratory cannonfire to signal French victories that never existed.[117]

Indeed, Europeans touted military victories as proof of their power in Europe, and so key to Michel's success was the French projection of military victory over other European powers. Michel sought an agreement that granted protection to French missionaries and offered France the same trading rights that the Netherlands, England, and Portugal already had in Persia. The Safavids had little interest in granting trading rights to the French but were, however, enticed by the idea of having a new European military ally.

The Safavids had long played European powers against each other.[118] In 1622, for example, Shah Abbas I had granted the English trading rights in exchange for removing the Portuguese from their seat of power in the Persian Gulf at the port of Hormuz. The dismissal of the Portuguese paved the way for English ascendancy and the entry of the Dutch as Persia's main commercial partner in the region.[119] Adding France as a competitor to the English and Dutch and as an ally to help secure Persian borders appealed to the Safavids, who showed interest in French triumphs in their conversations with Michel. "His Majesty [the shah] asked if I had any news from Europe," notes Michel. "I showed him on maps of Europe, which I had brought expressly, from which places the emperor my master [Louis XIV] had been attacked. I explained to him the number of troops that His Majesty set against his enemies. The shah listened to what I explained

with pleasure and seemed surprised to see what I showed him in an instant of Germany, Portugal, England, and Italy. He asked me again as he did in the beginning if I thought the war would last a long time among the Christian princes. I responded that I could not tell him positively but it appeared as if the Dutch would be the first to sue for peace . . . and after that, the others would be forced to ask for peace also." By boasting of French triumphs, Michel sought to counter the rumors of French failure spread by other European powers. The shah consented to French celebratory cannonfire, which further signaled friendship between France and Persia and served as a warning to the English, Dutch, and Portuguese in Isfahan.[120]

Michel used French military victories as leverage when negotiating the treaty, arguing that because the Dutch, English, and Portuguese did not pay any customs duties, neither should the French. However, the Safavids claimed that the other Europeans had acquired these rights during the time of Shah Abbas I, after having rendered service to Persia.[121] The English took the port of Hormuz from the Portuguese and returned it to the Persians; the Dutch provided necessary spices and in return took silk; and the Portuguese gained rights as a consolation for losing Hormuz. The French, they reasoned, had done no service to Persia to deserve special privileges.

Disillusioned by the difficult negotiations, Michel writes: "It is certain that we cannot imagine the trouble of dealing with the Orientals. The Persians are not so violent as the Turks, but their deceit is much greater. It is accompanied by a pride that gives them the amount of ambassadors they see in their court, without sending any."[122] Up to this point in his memoirs, Michel has for the most part refrained from such strong cultural stereotypes. Yet when recounting how he found himself unable to negotiate around the formidable barriers presented by his European competitors, Michel attributes the possibility of failure to Persian culture, thereby discrediting the Persians. This was a protective device to defend himself and deflect blame onto the Persians if the negotiations failed.

However, Michel and the Persians found a way to strike a bargain. The Safavid court suggested that the only possibility for securing free trade in Persia involved French military aid. The Persian minister proposed, "If you [France] do not want to pay any customs, engage yourself in guarding our maritime coasts against all types of enemies and we will chase the English, Dutch, and Portuguese from the empire and only trade with you."[123] Michel did not have the authority to make such an agreement, but he understood that the French could gain rights in Persia only by keeping alive the promise of French arms. When negotiations reached a stalemate, Michel warned, "Persia believes it will always be at peace because it has enjoyed it for more than eighty years but a time may come when it will require the aid of France."[124]

Michel dangled the possibility of French military support and won the day with a treaty that granted France missionary rights and almost the same trading rights as the English, Portuguese, and Dutch. In the end, however, Michel, could not procure for France precisely the same privileges enjoyed by its European competitors, who threatened the Safavids with attacks on their Gulf ports if the treaty went through entirely in France's favor.[125] Yet the possibility of French arms piqued Safavid attention, so much so that the Safavids made a request for French troops through a follow-up mission: the Persian embassy of Mohammad Reza Beg to France in 1715.

* * *

Pierre-Victor Michel's pursuit of the first treaty between France and Persia reveals the difficulties that plagued early modern contacts at a time when communication was sparse and cumbersome. Lack of knowledge of local political players created unforeseen challenges, and European competitors added to the complications. Although steeped in problems, the French embassy under Michel nevertheless resulted in a successful negotiation.

Michel achieved this by manipulating a diplomatic international procedure that included letters of authorization, large entourages, ceremony, and notions of precedence. Except for Michel's view of Persian male susceptibility to the sway of women, for the most part cultural difference did not play an important role in his descriptions of complications that arose during the course of the mission. After all, one of the chief obstacles to Michel was French: Marie Petit, who consumed Michel's attention and drove him to work even harder to find a way to prove his diplomatic status to the Persians and find commonalities. However, in the end, the tools of diplomacy prevailed. Michel's memoirs confirm that early embassies abroad faced extraordinary obstacles due to the lack of permanent relations but, despite great odds, could prevail through mutual international diplomatic procedures.

Michel recognized that Persia and France shared similar institutions and mutual tools of credentials, ceremony, and notions of prestige. What sets Michel apart from his French counterparts is his reluctance to analyze and criticize Persian monarchy, politics, customs, and religion. Generally, Michel refrains from assumptions about the Orient, but at the end he strategically relies on the idea of Persian pride to shift responsibility for failure from himself to his hosts. On the whole, Michel's memoirs represent Persia as another monarchy, like France, that respected pageantry, material luxury, and honor symbolized through gift-giving, as well as credentials stamped with royal authority. Michel's embassy suggests overlapping notions of spectacle and precedence between Europe and Persia—issues at stake in the next major French-Persian encounter, the visit of Mohammad Reza Beg to France in 1715.

4

# The Persian Embassy to France in 1715

## *Conflict and Understanding*

In 1715, the final year of Louis XIV's reign, the French court welcomed an "exotic" visitor: the Persian ambassador Mohammad Reza Beg.[1] Visits from representatives of Oriental monarchs were spectacular affairs and staged with great pomp.[2] Frenchmen gathered to witness their unusual clothing, strange possessions, and magnificent gifts for the king. The interest in the foreign guests offered Louis XIV the chance to celebrate his status as a global leader. The difficulty, however, was handling these visits within the confines of French ceremony that staged Louis XIV's power.

Oriental visits in the second half of the seventeenth century differed from European visits. They were more spectacular and raised unusual ceremonial problems in regard to precedence of foreign nations and individual status of their ambassadors. Conflicts over precedence, which was intended to signal an individual or nation's prestige over another, had been common during European embassies. To avoid these clashes, French courtiers who held the post of *introducteur des ambassadeurs* (the official in charge of organizing court receptions) tried to manage diplomatic events by recording events in memoirs to set a pattern for future events. During Oriental visits, in which there was no standard for matters of ceremony, disputes and issues of precedence played out on a world stage and threatened the success of the events. French courtiers once again turned to their records to find precedent when questions arose.

Records maintained by the *introducteur des ambassadeurs* reveal that courtiers managed diplomatic events by comparing and sorting them into groups. European diplomats were divided into two categories: *ordinaire* and *extraordinaire*. Visits from Oriental diplomats were treated as *extraordinaire* due to their more spectacular nature and infrequency. Yet the identity of an ambassador from afar was difficult to ascertain. Further, visitors from beyond Europe often displayed unpredictable reactions to festivities, creating tension and reflecting the distance in tastes between Frenchmen and their diplomatic guests.[3] The presentation of Bourbon power was most threatened during Oriental embassies in which Frenchmen and foreigners found themselves at odds over manners, religious customs, and the handling of diplomatic tools such as gifts and the *lettres de créance*. The French court had to decide how far to bend rigid ceremonial rules to accommodate foreign codes of behavior without threatening French prestige. How did courtiers make such ad hoc decisions? The records of the *introducteur des ambassadeurs* reveal that courtiers managed

diplomatic events by improvising a hierarchy of order. While all Oriental ambassadors were treated as *extraordinaire*, not all Asian monarchs were equal; in fact, the French imagined a hierarchy among foreign lands, in which the Persians often fared better.

The Persian visit of 1715 illustrates how courtiers confronted cultural differences that could disrupt diplomatic relations. The memoirs of the Baron de Breteuil, who served as Louis XIV's official *introducteur des ambassadeurs* from 1699 to 1715, vividly describe the conflict over ceremony between the French court and the Persian embassy of 1715.[4] Breteuil found it difficult to mold the ambassador to meet French diplomatic and court rituals and, ultimately, blamed his exoticism for the missteps in ceremony. However, an analysis of Breteuil's memoirs reveals that common explanations for early modern conflict between East and West, such as Orientalism and cultural misunderstanding, did not shape the disagreements between Breteuil and the Beg. Instead, Breteuil's memoirs attest to French and Persian cooperation over cultural differences and a common interest in projecting the grandeur of their respective monarchies. This similar ambition resulted in clashes of precedence between the French and Persian representatives, comparable to those that occurred between European powers. In the end, commensurable ideas of spectacle and royal preeminence motivated the encounter between France and Persia.

## French Ceremony and the *Introducteur des Ambassadeurs*

Ambassadors from across Europe frequently visited the French court to negotiate treaties and marriages and send messages between heads of state. By the reign of Louis XIV, the court had developed a complex ceremonial system to deal with foreign diplomats. Ambassadorial protocol, like all court etiquette, was vital to Bourbon rule. Court ceremony established hierarchies, mediated conflicts, displayed royal power, and played a key role in the establishing and continual reestablishing of Louis XIV's power.[5] Mishandling of court ceremony could cause severe problems between courtiers, insult a foreign guest, and, above all, negatively impact the king's image.

The post of *introducteur des ambassadeurs* dated back to Henri III, who created the office in January 1585 as part of the reorganization of the royal household. At first a single man held the office, but eventually, like many other royal offices that the king sold for money, the post was divided into two parts so that the king had more to sell. Each officer served for alternating six-month periods called semesters: January to June, and June through December. Several *introducteurs*, such as Anne de Brulon, Nicolas de Berlize, the Baron de Breteuil, and Dufort de Cheverny, wrote memoirs that described their court duties.[6] Among the most famous of the *introducteurs*, Nicolas de Sainctot, whose family held the post of *maître des cérémonies* from 1635 to 1691 and *introducteur des ambassadeurs* from 1691 to 1752, prepared a detailed account of court ceremonial procedures.[7] He writes in the preface, "This work is the fruit of fifty-seven years of experience that I had the honor to pass in the service of Your Majesty; I took care to gather all that concerned French ceremony."[8]

Thanks to his study and careful recording of previous ambassadorial visits, Sainctot became known for his intimate knowledge of court procedure to the point where

other courtiers went to him for advice on disputes. The Baron de Breteuil, who served as *introducteur des ambassadeurs* from 1699 to 1715, wrote Nicolas de Sainctot to ask his advice on how to handle a dispute in precedence during the visit of the Moroccan ambassador in 1699.[9] François Pidou de Saint Olon, who served as *gentilhomme ordinaire de la chambre du roi*—a lower rank than *introducteur*—transgressed his station by marching next to the Baron de Breteuil during the reception of the Moroccan dignitary. Breteuil, disturbed by this breach of protocol and the dishonor to his own rank of *introducteur*, wrote to his colleague Sainctot, "You are a consummate expert in this vocation, in which I am still just a novice; thus, Monsieur, it is to you I look to guide me by your knowledge, and by past examples from similar occasions."[10] The Baron de Breteuil, a fellow *introducteur*, courtier, and colleague, acknowledged Sainctot's expertise in matters of ceremony and confirmed that his memoirs, filled with examples of court receptions, were an important source for his contemporaries. Breteuil himself added to the court record of events with his own set of memoirs that related his experience with royal occasions.

Breteuil's letter to Sainctot shows the importance of protocol for rank at court. Missteps or attempts to change customary procedures could evoke a variety of responses, from merely raised eyebrows to the taking of serious offense, depending on the situation and the personalities involved. But court etiquette could have implications far beyond the status of courtiers, since it was often oriented toward international audiences and played a role in the competition among European rulers for prestige.[11] Matters of precedence played a central role in the assertion of the relative status of rulers and countries. The story of the continuing arguments between France and Spain over the status of their ambassadors remains the best example of the importance of ambassadorial ceremony. French and Spanish rulers had argued over the issue since the meeting of the Congress of Mantua in 1459, when the diplomat from the king of Castile, angered by the French ambassador's audacity at having taken precedence ahead of him, took it upon himself to force the French diplomat out of his seat. Spanish diplomats continued to hold status above French representatives until Louis XIV drastically increased the stakes in 1661. When a fight broke out in London over the issue of whose coach would hold precedence in the parade, the young French king threatened Philip IV with war if he refused to acknowledge that the French monarch and those representing him were due higher honors at courts throughout Europe. In 1662, the Spanish ambassador in France apologized for what had occurred in London the year before and conceded that French ambassadors would always hold precedence above Spanish ones.[12] Louis XIV had successfully secured prestige over the Spanish monarchy.

Nicolas de Sainctot devoted a great deal of his memoirs to ambassadorial receptions, and he thought of his writings as a handbook for managing ceremonial disputes. He hoped that by using earlier examples of ambassadorial visits as guides, *introducteurs* could give each ambassador his due and, in turn, prevent any disgrace to the French monarchy or any other party. In his preface, Sainctot tries to convince the king to print his writings. Although his memoirs never ended up in print, we discover why he believed his work was important and necessary. He writes, "If Your Majesty judges to print my memoirs . . . Your Majesty will end all the new pretensions of ambassadors often caused by the unfaithfulness of accounts that their predecessors have given them."[13] As he puts it, his account will ensure that "ceremony is no longer uncertain. By this means [the

memoirs], Your Majesty will avoid all the embarrassing difficulties that result from ambition."[14] However, perhaps the reason Louis XIV did not print Sainctot's work was precisely that he did not see ceremonies as rigid. Protocol was meant to keep things the same, but the king continuously changed status and protocol as part of his exercise of power. To have a courtier fix statuses and protocols could pose a challenge to his authority.

## Embassies from Europe

Sainctot describes how the court conducted ambassadorial receptions from Venice, England, Genoa, Spain, Holland, and other European countries.[15] The description of these visits shows a strictly laid-out ceremonial system developed for each state. The court bestowed honors upon each ambassador according to the status of his country. For example, ambassadors of crowned heads received the highest honors.[16] Next, the court dispensed privileges depending on the status of the visiting diplomat: the rank of ambassador warranted the grandest receptions, while the court entertained secondary ministers or envoys with fewer respects.[17] Another distinction existed within the rank of ambassador: extraordinary ambassadors accepted more privileges than an *ambassadeur ordinaire*, a resident ambassador. Sainctot writes, "An extraordinary ambassador was, in the past, sent to terminate a single affair, for some spectacular event, to offer peace [or] a treaty alliance, to compliment a prince on the birth of a son, on an accession to the throne [or] on a marriage, or to send condolences; but never does he [an extraordinary ambassador] stay at a court to live after finishing the mission for which he was sent."[18] An *ambassadeur extraordinaire* was "housed, furnished, expenses paid, treated by presents on the part of the king," while a resident ambassador was not.[19] The court hosted an *ambassadeur extraordinaire* in the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs Extraordinaires, the palace of the Maréchal d'Ancre on the Rue de Tournon in Paris, for most of the seventeenth century. The concierge and the two *jardiniers* (gardeners) formed the permanent staff of the *hôtel* and furnished it to serve the particular needs of each arriving ambassador.[20] Once a foreign diplomat was settled, the *introducteur des ambassadeurs* negotiated with the king and the ambassador to select a day for an entry into Paris—offering a grand parade for the Parisian people and ending in a royal audience.[21]

Sainctot outlines precisely how *ambassadeurs ordinaires* and *extraordinares* from states without crowned heads, such as Malta, the Dutch Republic, and Venice, as well as those representing the German electors and the thirteen Swiss cantons, should be treated.[22] His description of the handling of ambassadors from Malta exemplifies the detailed stage-managing involved in visits from different places. First, he notes that an *ambassadeur ordinaire* of Malta had no entry, no *maréchal* (marshal) of France to accompany him to his audience, and no honor of French and Swiss arms outside or inside the palace. Further, he pointed out that a Maltese *ambassadeur ordinaire* did not cover his head at the audience. During the ceremony, the king had a defined role to play as well. Sainctot describes the monarch's movements: the king stood up from his chair, saluted the foreign diplomat by taking off his hat, and then put it on again to listen. After the royal audience, the ambassador was supposed to dine at Versailles or wherever the king resided at the moment.

The *ambassador extraordinaire* of Malta received a different treatment. He had an entry into Paris and a *maréchal* of France to accompany him. On the day of his audience, the *introducteur des ambassadeurs* picked him up. Sainctot explains the procedure: "The ambassador goes to receive the *maréchal* at the bottom of the stairs, invites him to enter his apartment, but if there is a hurry to leave, they go inside the carriage, and since it is the *maréchal* giving the honors, the ambassador enters the carriage first and takes the first seat at the back and the *maréchal* sits close to him."[23] Every step was preplanned through the rest of the visit as well. The *ambassadeur extraordinaire* of Malta did not receive the honor of arms outside the palace, but he did once inside. Sainctot writes, "When he goes to the audience, the *maréchal* of France accompanies him: he finds the grand master of ceremonies at the bottom of the steps to receive him; the one hundred Swiss [guards] are on the steps with a halberd [pike] in hand."[24]

Such detailed ceremonial planning was intended to avoid mistakes in precedence that could insult the visiting ambassador, the king, the French courtiers, or other foreign dignitaries present. European countries had frequent diplomatic correspondence and had common rules of diplomacy and precedence to abide by. Handbooks on diplomacy, such as Abraham van Wicquefort's *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, laid out the diplomatic procedures and the differences in practice between European states. Any student of diplomacy in the late seventeenth century would have been aware of how each state handled ambassadors, due to Wicquefort's text, which was translated into German and English and reprinted several times in French between 1680 and 1790.[25] The writings of the *introducteurs* helped to further codify French ceremonial procedure. The recording of protocol during the course of the seventeenth century meant that when differences over diplomatic etiquette occurred, a common set of rules based on a shared European experience could be applied to resolve a situation. For example, when questions concerning the quality of an envoy arose, diplomats understood that *lettres de créance* identified his ranking. "The *lettres de créance*," writes Wicquefort, "are necessary to the ambassador, both because it assigns him his role and signals it to the prince to whom he is sent and because without them he is unable to negotiate."[26] When these credentials were unavailable, common practice called for another method of identification: "It is necessary that he [the ambassador] brings another tool, power, proxy, message of authority to act, [or] passport" that would explain the ambassador's status and, in turn, the honors he deserves.[27]

Abraham van Wicquefort described the close diplomatic ties between European powers. The Holy Roman Emperor maintained resident ambassadors in Rome and Madrid and sent lower-ranking ministers to all other courts. He dispatched extraordinary ambassadors to Constantinople, Poland, Venice, and elsewhere. The king of France had resident ambassadors stationed in Rome, Madrid, London, Lisbon, Venice, Turin, The Hague, and Soleurre, Switzerland. Resident ambassadors from Spain remained in Rome, Paris, London, Lisbon, Vienna, Venice, and the Swiss cantons. Wicquefort explains that the king of England had ambassadors in all courts except Vienna and Venice, where he only sent extraordinary ambassadors. To ensure commerce in the East, England had one ambassador in the Ottoman Empire. The English also had an ambassador in Holland. The Venetian Republic kept ambassadors in Rome, Vienna, Paris, Spain, and Constantinople; it sent extraordinary ambassadors to England and the Swiss lands but rarely to the Dutch Republic. The Dutch Republic only held ambassadors in

England and France, while the Swiss cantons had no ambassadors at all; when they sent an embassy, they appointed a certain number of deputies. Wicquefort also mentions the roles of the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy on the diplomatic scene. The Ottomans honored permanent ambassadors in their own country, but they did not possess resident representatives abroad, while the czar did not have regular diplomatic contact with other princes but occasionally sent extraordinary ambassadors.[28]

Sainctot cites many cases of extraordinary ambassadorial missions from European ambassadors, and they all fall into a similar pattern, contrasting remarkably with the far rarer visits from Oriental dignitaries. For example, the 1612 and 1679 Spanish embassies to arrange French marriages or the extraordinary 1644 French embassy to renew the English alliance following the death of Louis XIII all seem quite commonplace, given their specific but recurrent tasks of arranging marriages, treaties, and alliances. And the resident ambassadors, living continuously in Paris or near Versailles, provided nothing so sensational as their splendid Oriental counterparts. The Baron de Breteuil provides us with an example: the departure of Alvise Pisani, the ambassador of Venice, and the arrival of his replacement, Lorenzo Tiepolo, in 1703. Louis XIV honored Pisani before his departure with a brief ceremony and dinner.[29] At Versailles, Breteuil escorted the incoming ambassador, Tiepolo, to his audience in the king's bedroom, then on to the bedchambers of the dauphin and the king's grandsons. The visit was unremarkable: there were no crowds or rich decor to greet the new European dignitary. Breteuil writes: "In the king's rooms, there was only the Marquis de Torcy, Louis XIV's minister, Villeras, and himself."[30] The calm of the event shows that the monarchy treated the arrival of the Venetian ambassador as an everyday business affair that did not require any great spectacle. Still, European ambassadors did generate interest within the court, and their visits were reported in the popular *Mercure galant*, a journal that related entertaining court news and stories. The French court staged elaborate entertainments for European visitors, such as the exiled Charles II and his family and the retired Queen Christina of Sweden.[31] However, for many European diplomats, the frequency of their visits was so great that details of the ceremony became repetitive. In fact, for an earlier visit of a Venetian ambassador, M. Venier, in May of 1689, the *Mercure galant* declares, "I will not repeat to you the ceremonies that are performed at these types of audiences because they are always the same."[32] Again, for the visit of Milord Jersey, the extraordinary ambassador from England in 1699, the journal notes, "I have already given more than fifty similar descriptions . . . everything passed as usual."[33]

While these frequent European embassies often directly addressed diplomatic affairs between France and its neighbors, they were also important for enhancing the French king's reputation. The *Mercure galant* announced most of the visits, sometimes in just a few lines—such as for the visit of the Spanish ambassador in 1672: "Monsieur Comte de Molina, extraordinary ambassador of Spain, made his entry accompanied by Monsieur Maréchal de Grancé; and a few days later he was driven to the royal audience by M. le Comte d'Armagnac."[34] These announcements reflected the number of compliments paid by various diplomats to Louis XIV's person. In 1673, during the Franco-Dutch war, the *Mercure* describes at greater length the arrival of ten foreign ambassadors to Louis XIV's camp: "The king is besieged by a great number of ambassadors and extraordinary envoys who came to compliment him from all parts [of the world]."[35]

The reception of the Doge of Genoa of 1685 reminds us how diplomatic ceremony could be used to enhance the grandeur of the king without addressing a treaty, marriage alliance, or other specific matter. The Doge voyaged to Versailles solely to apologize to Louis XIV for aiding the Spanish, an ally of the Dutch, during the Franco-Dutch war. Sainctot calls the visit of the Doge as "an event too spectacular to miss describing" and says it was "unprecedented."[36] The court created an impressive event down to the smallest details in order to glorify the king and humiliate the Doge. The audience was the first to take place in the richly decorated Hall of Mirrors, and the Doge was required to wear magnificent clothes. Sainctot explains, "It says in the treaty that the Doge will talk to the king in his ceremonial costume; this condition is questionable because the Doge has two types of ceremonial outfits. It would be appropriate if he wore the most dignified clothing [because the more dignified] the more he will bring grandeur on his behalf to the feet of the King, and the more he will mark that [dignity] of His Majesty."[37] Further, the king had to ensure that representatives of foreign leaders witnessed the visit in order to report back to their own courts about the lavish event and the submission of another European country to Louis XIV. "Every ambassador," states Sainctot, "must be invited to witness this act because it is a type of brilliant spectacle that concerns the King's reputation in foreign countries."[38] Through this spectacle, the king ensured that his court, his subjects, and other European rulers heard the news of the submission of the Genoese Doge to the French monarchy through gazettes and images. The lesson: do not defy the Sun King.[39]

Written descriptions and pictorial images of the visit, such as Claude Guy Hallé's painting "Réparation faite à Louis XIV par le doge de Gênes, 15 mai 1685," commemorated the Doge's audience with the king and captured the splendor of the court. The event appeared in medallion form in a design by the French sculptor Martin Desjardins titled "La Soumission du doge de Gênes—15 mai 1685."[40] An engraving in the 1686 almanac entitled "Louis le Grand la terreur et l'admiration de l'univers" and subtitled "La Soumission de la republique de Gennes" sent the message of French ascendancy for a wider French audience. The *Mercure galant* emphasized the reverence paid to Louis XIV by the Doge. It noted that he and the other senators made "two deep bows to His Majesty. The king stood up and answered to the bows by lifting his hat a bit, after which the monarch signaled to them to approach. . . . The Doge then went up the first step of the throne where he made his third bow."[41] There the Doge stopped and proceeded to talk to the king. Next the *Mercure* notes that "every time His Majesty's name was mentioned in the speech, the Doge took off his hat," paying the utmost respect to the king's person.[42] The visual and written descriptions of the Doge deferring to the French king served Louis XIV's propaganda scheme. But despite the glorification of the Doge's visit, he was, in the end, a minor European leader and could not compete with the opportunity presented by Oriental embassies to advertise the Sun King's reign.

## Oriental Visits

French courtiers and journals labeled a vast geographic area from Siam to Morocco to Muscovy under the category of "Oriental," although they were geographically and culturally distinct. These countries participated infrequently in the European diplomatic

system. Even the Ottoman Empire, which was a major player in European politics, did not station ambassadors permanently in Europe and did not routinely send embassies abroad.

Visits from Oriental diplomats were rare occasions, and so these embassies naturally ignited French curiosity about exotic places and peoples.These visits offered an ideal setting for the king to celebrate his reign. The average European visit could not compete with ceremony that incorporated Oriental figures, fashion, and habits never before seen by the majority of the French public. During the 1669 Turkish visit, people swarmed to catch a glimpse of Suleiman Aga, the Turkish visitor. Sainctot relates: "Since the mores and customs of the Turks are so different from our own, the people run in crowds, either to see them eat on their rugs spread out on the ground, or to watch them pray."[43] Seventeen years later, the visit of the three Siamese ambassadors created another sensation. "The ambassadors," writes Sainctot, "had Swiss [guards] from the company of the hundred Swiss bodyguards of the king to prevent the great crowd that came from entering their quarters. They kept [the guards] with them during their entire stay in Paris."[44]

Everything about these exotic ambassadors, from what they ate to what they wore, was newsworthy. The unusual outfits of the Siamese became objects of attention for print and images during their visit in the 1680s. Sainctot pauses in his account of the ceremony to describe their "muslin hats shaped in pyramids, on the bottom of which were crowns of gold, two fingers thick, which marked their stature; from these crowns, flowers made of very fine gold leaves, in which rubies were attached to these leaves, were so light that the slightest movement shook them."[45] The *Mercure galant* devoted two volumes—twenty-six pages—just to descriptions of the audience and the exotic habits of the Siamese, and it continued to include long descriptions of Oriental visits right to the end of Louis XIV's reign.[46]

Just before Louis's death, the visit of the Persian ambassador in 1715 generated a great deal of writing on Persia—the *Mercure* devoted an entire volume just to the ambassador's voyage to Europe and furnished additional articles on his reception at Versailles. Oriental ambassadors became instant celebrities, and their appearance prompted keen public interest in their cultures.

The monarchy took advantage of the interest generated by the Oriental embassies to advertise the global reputation of the Sun King. Sainctot notes that the visits indicated Louis XIV's great status around the world. For the first Siamese visit in 1684, Sainctot flatters the king with a portrayal of a Siamese monarch awestruck by the Sun King. "The King of Siam, surprised by the King's great reputation and due to the published accounts of the noteworthy victories that he continually won over his enemies, sent three ambassadors to ask him [Louis XIV] for his friendship and to establish an alliance with him."[47] He suggests that the attention paid by distant monarchies to Louis XIV evinced his worldwide reputation for military victory. Further, Sainctot quotes the speech of one of the Siamese ambassadors emphasizing Louis XIV's renown as a great leader: "Because the King of Siam, his master, learned of the great victories that the King won over his enemies, the prosperity of his reign, the happiness of his subjects, and the wisdom with which His Majesty governs his empire, he wanted to seek his friendship."[48] The Marquis de Croissy, who served as minister and secretary of state of foreign affairs, responded to the Siamese ambassadors by acknowledging that the king's glory had

attracted the "admiration of all the universe" and brought word of his glory all the way to the Siamese monarchy.[49]

The royal letters and compliments delivered by ambassadors on behalf of the Oriental rulers appeared in journals such as the *Mercure galant*. In January 1682, the *Mercure* printed the Moroccan ambassador's compliment to the king. The message began with the utmost praise for the French monarch: "The emperor of France, Louis XIV, the greatest of all the emperors and Christian kings that there ever was . . ."[50] The rest of the speech was a laudatory description of the Sun King's reputation that had reached the ears of the Moroccan royalty: "The Emperor, my master, having heard spoken the great things that Your Majesty has done in Europe, such as leading his armies to conquer kingdoms, winning a great many battles and like a lion, defeating all his enemies, while carrying all the terror and dread through all sorts of dangers."[51] Of course, this praise came from a self-described great king and warrior: the king of Morocco. The *Mercure* printed the portion of the ambassador's speech that praised the Moroccan king's "conquests of Sus, Fez . . . [and] the glory of a great number of battles that made him the greatest and most courageous of Africa."[52] The messages bolstered the Moroccan monarch, thereby sanctioning his compliment to Louis XIV.

The crown treated Oriental ambassadors differently than their European counterparts because the former had greater potential for spectacle and the enhancement of Louis's reputation. Sainctot describes the extra privileges paid to non-European diplomats: "All the Oriental ambassadors, and even the envoys, have extraordinary honors in the villages along their route, even though we do not give [these honors] to ambassadors of crowned heads, it is an established custom in France [to do this for Oriental ambassadors] and to pay their costs during their entire stay."[53] For example, during the visit of the Siamese ambassadors of 1684, "these mandarins embarked at Calais. The king's lieutenant received them with honor [and] had them complimented by the city guards who offered presents of wine and sweets."[54] Sainctot continues, "The Marquis de Seignelay, secretary of state and of the department of the marine . . . had been warned by Sieur le Vachet which day the mandarins were to arrive in Calais. They found on his behalf a maitre d'hôtel to pay their costs and carriages for their entire stay in France, all at the King's expense."[55] Further, "during the entire passage from Calais to Paris they received the compliments of the guards of all the cities through which they passed."[56]

## Exchange of Diplomatic Gifts and Credibility

Not only were Oriental visitors treated differently to aggrandize spectacle, but they were also expected to add to the grandeur of the visit with exceptional, exotic gifts to the French monarchy. The presents that the Eastern ambassadors brought to France fit with the luxurious image of the Orient and attracted as much attention as the ambassadors themselves, if not more. Nicolas de Sainctot described the presents and did not fail to judge their value. For the visit of the Moroccan ambassador in 1698–99, he writes, "The ambassador was preceded by eight or ten people from his suite that carried on their heads the ambassador's presents for the king. These presents consisted of a school-saddle of red morocco with its bridle, and four or five bundles of as much muslin as

lion and other animal skins, the total value at six or seven hundred ll. [French livres]."[57] The gifts from the Muscovite ambassador in 1687 "consisted of various fabrics and rich furs."[58] However, disappointment over the gifts could ruin the impact of the visit.

If courtiers or other observers deemed the value of the presents too low, the compliment paid by the foreign ruler to the king greatly diminished. When the Ottoman diplomat Suleiman Aga visited the French court in 1669, the foreigner's lack of presents for Louis XIV heightened the court's suspicions as to his true rank, for a genuine ambassador would always have generous gifts to bestow on the king.[59] Breteuil discusses in his memoirs the presents brought by the same Moroccan ambassador described by Sainctot in 1699. The presents did not impress the courtiers, and Breteuil offers an explanation of the low quality of gifts: "It is not that the king of Morocco is poor . . . but he has a greed comparable to his cruelty."[60]

Courtiers complained about the poor worth of the gifts during the visit of the Persian ambassador of 1715 as well. The Duc de Saint-Simon later wrote, "The gifts were as disgraceful to the King of Persia as they were to King Louis."[61] Saint-Simon was not the only one to criticize the presents. The Baron de Breteuil reveals that "the public was scandalized to the point of uttering slanderous remarks about the ambassador."[62] Breteuil continues that this added to the gossip that the ambassador was an imposter who did not represent the shah of Persia and, in fact, had never even visited the Persian monarch's court.[63]

## Making an Impression

The French court faced the additional challenge of impressing not only their European audience but also the ambassadors, who often came from opulent courts themselves. To increase his reputation beyond Europe, Louis XIV desired that the Eastern diplomats leave the Bourbon court awestruck. The French went to great lengths to showcase French achievements and receive admiration from Asian visitors. For the Siamese visit of 1686, for instance, the court stage-managed the foreigners' responses to Jean-Baptiste Lully's opera so that a positive foreign reception of French culture could be disseminated to the public.[64] Yet the king and his officials also had to match the spectacular nature of Oriental rituals and often resorted to imitation, revealing French insecurity that their own cultural projects were not enough to dazzle all foreigners.

In 1669, during the entry parade of Suleiman Aga, the Turkish diplomat, courtiers noted hints of Turkish tradition. Nicolas de Sainctot relates, "Suleiman found a double line of soldiers in the street along his route and marched to the sound of a cannon, which started the moment that he passed under the door to imitate the custom of the Turks in the reception that they put on for ambassadors."[65] During the Turk's reception with Louis XIV at Saint-Germain, the gallery replicated what the French imagined to be the staging of Asian rulers: "The gallery was adorned with several beautiful tapestries of the crown; the entire floor was covered with rugs, and two sides of the gallery were filled with large vases elevated on two pedestals also in silver; at the end of the gallery was a throne elevated on eight steps decorated with the same vases, and boxes of silver which cost more than twenty million."[66] Tapestries, rugs, and vases were common elements of Oriental settings

that the French adopted for diplomatic ceremonies. In fact, Breteuil confirms that the carpet that covered the step to Louis XIV's throne and lay under the chair itself was a Persian carpet with a gold background.[67]

Imitation went even further when Louis XIV instructed Hughes de Lionne, his secretary of foreign affairs, to act as his grand vizir (the highest minister in the Ottoman government) in order to discover the rank of Suleiman Aga. The French minister took his instructions to play the role of the vizir literally. Learning all he could about Turkish custom and ceremony from Laurent d'Arvieux, a young traveler who spoke Turkish and was well versed in Ottoman culture and ceremony, Lionne mixed Turkish elements into his meeting with Suleiman Aga in imitation of the grand vizir and Ottoman custom.[68] In his memoirs, d'Arvieux described the sumptuous salon, peppered with Oriental decorations, where the Ottoman guest was to meet with Lionne, who himself sat on a cushioned daybed richly adorned with Oriental fabrics, such as silks and gold brocade, all laid out upon a fine Persian carpet. Lionne and his servants served Suleiman Aga coffee, a typical Turkish custom, before the actual meeting began and had him sit facing Lionne on a stool upholstered in damask with golden fringe.[69] Laurent d'Arvieux remained critical of what he considered a farce and believed that the monarchy should display grandeur through its own rituals instead of borrowing Turkish rites and abandoning French culture.[70]

During the Siamese embassy of 1686, the royal audience for the three ambassadors sent by Phra Narai reflected aspects of Siamese court ritual. The Marquis de Sourches described in his memoirs how the entry of the three diplomats through the rooms of Versailles was accompanied by "the sound of trumpets and drums, imitating the custom of the king of Siam, who never descended to an audience hall without this music."[71] In a similar vein, Louis XIV entertained the Siamese visitors in the Hall of Mirrors. Trying to match the elaborate Siamese display described to him by his ambassadors to Siam, Louis XIV decided to host his foreign guests in the most ornate room in Versailles.[72] The French king received the ambassadors on a silver throne, situated on a high platform (similar to the reception of Suleiman Aga in 1669) covered with a floral carpet, mimicking the lofty throne of Phra Narai and the floral pattern of his reception hall in Siam.[73] The expensive throne—later melted down to pay for Louis XIV's wars—became the object of an engraving entitled "L'Estrade et le trône dressé à l'extrémité de la Galerie des Glaces pour la reception de l'ambassadeur de Siam," printed in the *Mercure galant* in September 1686.[74] Silver candelabras, also associated with the Siamese monarchy, stood on each of the steps of the platform. Louis XIV himself, dressed in gold cloth studded with diamonds, reflected the Siamese monarch's own diamond-encrusted gold outfit.[75] Louis XIV staged himself as an Oriental ruler on a throne styled on the Siamese custom of keeping the monarch distant and separate from all others.[76] However, in keeping with the French tradition of having the king within reach of his heirs and public, Louis XIV did surround himself with the male members of his immediate family. Despite the king's attempt to portray himself as an absolute monarch who remained as powerful in his own dominion as the king of Siam was in his land, the monarchy had to be sure to balance the expectations of the courtiers and maintain French tradition while impressing its Asian guests.

## Culture Clash: Reconciling Notions of Diplomatic Etiquette

These visits presented another complication: how to reconcile French ceremony with Eastern traditions. During Oriental visits, religious customs, unusual to the court, created problems between the visitors and their French hosts that did not occur during visits by Europeans. While ceremonial disputes arose during visits from European countries, a common diplomatic and Christian tradition could be called upon to resolve problems. However, the French court had to make special adjustments for Oriental visitors unfamiliar with the European, Catholic, and Protestant notions of etiquette. Everyday matters, even those as mundane as food, became sensitive areas where cultural and religious differences met. The French court had to adjust its usual diplomatic hospitality as it learned about the habits and dietary restrictions of its foreign visitors. Nicolas de Sainctot notes in his writings that the Muscovite entourage that visited France in 1668 ate fish because "they apparently had started two days of Lent that lasts fifteen days in a row, during which they only eat fish in oil, and abstain from eggs, butter, and milk. Outside of their Lent, they eat meats on Saturday; but they don't eat meat on Wednesday or Friday."[77] Once their Lent ended, "they started to eat meat, and requested that we not offer them either hares or rabbits, or pigeons, or young calves, because they say that hares and rabbits are too common, pigeons are too innocent, and calves are not good. . . . [W]hat they like the best are goslings, ducks, and suckling pigs."[78] The Muscovites' Eastern Christian tradition of eating forced the French to adjust. However, the culinary habits of the Muslim visitors required even greater modification, especially during their fasting periods. Sainctot describes the fasting of the Moroccans who came to France in 1699: "At noon, the officers of the king served a table of fifteen place settings; he [the ambassador] sat alone at the table and did not eat anything at all, since it was their day of fasting, which forbade them to eat until the sun set; the others in his suite were behind him."[79]

The French court, while trying to accommodate the daily habits of the Oriental diplomats, faced a fundamental cultural issue: how to carry out French protocol, in which every step held meaning for the monarchy, without offending the foreign ambassador. To begin with, the French had to figure out the status of an Oriental diplomat—was he a full-fledged ambassador or a diplomat of lesser rank? They had to calibrate every part of their reception accordingly. The exact degree of honors was crucial, since the point was to neither inflate nor insult.

A letter from a monarch was the usual and expected form for verifying the ranking of a foreign dignitary. But Oriental visitors did not always carry such credentials, and sometimes refused to reveal them even when they possessed them. This created a period of uncertainty about the ranking of an ambassador and how he should be received during his voyage through France to Paris, his entry into the city, and his audience with the king. As described in Chapter 3, trouble occurred over the *lettres de créance* in the embassies of the Muscovite ambassador in 1668 and the Ottoman ambassador of 1669. In 1715, the identity of the Persian ambassador in France was also a lingering question. The Baron de Breteuil, who handled the visit, notes the gossip that the ambassador was a fraud.[80]

Over time, as the court received repeated embassies from Asian and African monarchies, French courtiers turned to prior visits, recorded in the memoirs of the *introducteurs* and the *Mercure,* for solutions to ceremonial glitches. Foremost, the court had to determine how far to honor the requests of an Oriental emissary without damaging French preeminence. French courtiers adjusted their rules of ceremony to accommodate their Oriental guests, but they were more gracious when they judged the ambassador to more admirable in terms of civility and prestige. Some Oriental countries were judged less important than others. The Moroccan embassy of 1699 revealed that French courtiers thought of Moroccans as less civil than themselves. Abdalla Bin Aycha, for instance, surprised the French with his polish and manners, unexpected from a Moroccan official. Breteuil reveals, "[His] speeches showed that he had more wit and politeness than we ever expected from a corsair born in Barbary and I am obliged to admit that in business that I have transacted with him, I found him to be a man of cleverness and reason, polished, worldly, and wise as much as any man I have known."[81] The Muscovites serve as another case in which the French judged prestige based on perceived notions of civility: the Muscovites were found to be less civil and therefore were the target of a greater number of remarks about their inability to conform to French protocol. Breteuil, for one, considered the Muscovites "barbarous."[82]

For the Persian embassy in 1715, Breteuil compared the status of prior foreign visits with that of the Persian one to decide whether to bestow certain honors on the Persian dignitary. In his memoirs, Breteuil deliberates how the French should bestow presents upon the Persian ambassador: "The custom is, when an ambassador goes down on the day of his entry to the ambassadorial hotel, that the king has him treated with presents for four days, and this custom is not only for the ambassadors of Europe but even for those of the East, as was practiced for the ambassadors of the king of Siam in 1686 and for those of Muscovy eighteen years before."[83] Breteuil reasoned that if they did it for the "barbarous" Muscovites, they should do it for the Persian ambassador.[84] Again, Breteuil weighed the status of Persia against other foreign places who had visited to determine the treatment of the Persian diplomat. Breteuil determined that the Persian reception called for the king to elevate himself on a throne because "this had been done to receive the reparation of the Doge of Genoa, and even for the ambassadors of the King of Siam, a prince infinitely less powerful and less considerable than the King of Persia."[85] Breteuil and other courtiers ranked Asian countries and used that hierarchy to determine protocol. The lofty status of Persia sometimes resulted in greater accommodation but also positioned the Persian ambassador as a challenger to French prestige.

## The Persian Visit: The Struggle for Prestige

Mohammad Reza Beg's visit marked the last magnificent show staged at Versailles to celebrate the aged French monarch. For the Persian visit in 1715, the staging of Bourbon power through a fantastic spectacle trumped the particular military and commercial interests that motivated the embassy from Persia. Usually the political results of the visits to Versailles did not match the grandeur: official treaties between France and distant Oriental Empires failed to materialize.[86] Persian and French officials residing in Persia organized the embassy to Louis XIV to request French military aid to rid Persia

of its enemies, especially the Arab pirates from Oman who were trying to take control of the Persian ports.[87] In exchange, the Persians offered the French special commercial privileges and protection for its missionaries. Persia had already presented this proposal in 1708, but at that time France was embroiled in the War of the Spanish Succession and faced financial difficulties and famines at home, so it was in no position to support Persia militarily. However, Louis XIV and his minister agreed to review the treaty once the war in Europe had ended. In 1715, Persia decided to follow up on the negotiations of 1708. The shah left the arrangement of the visit to Jean Richard, a French Lazariste missionary, who had accompanied the coadjutor of the bishop of Babylon, Gatien de Galliczon, to the shah's court; the bishop hoped to secure missionary privileges.[88] The shah charged Richard with the delivery of the presents destined for Louis XIV and gave the instructions for the embassy to the governor of Erivan, Muhammad Khan, who had the task of selecting an ambassador. The governor chose Mohammad Reza Beg, who held the position of *kalantar* or mayor of Erivan.[89] The governor of Erivan and Richard communicated with Louis XIV's ministers, Jérome de Pontchartrain, secretary of state for the navy and commerce, and the Marquis de Torcy, the minister of foreign affairs, about the impending Persian diplomatic visit.[90]

In 1715, the French crown was still in no position to honor Persia's military request, but nevertheless took advantage of the opportunity to spin the embassy's exotic appeal into a celebration of the monarchy. [91] The combination of stunning diplomatic displays and exotic attraction ensured a large audience for the Persian visit and intense public scrutiny of the Beg's actions during ceremonial events.

Once the ambassador disembarked in Marseille, the job of managing the ceremonial aspects of the visit fell to Louis-Nicolas le Tonnelier, Baron de Breteuil. Before he attained the post of *introducteur des ambassadeurs* in 1698, the Baron de Breteuil had inherited his father's position at court and became the *lecteur du roi*—an office that granted him access to the prestigious *petit-lever*, or waking ceremony, of the king.[92] In 1682, the court selected him as ambassador to the Duke of Mantua, a position of great honor that offered him diplomatic experience.[93] For the Persian visit, the king entrusted him to arrange the grand spectacle for Mohammad Reza Beg's visit to Versailles and the other smaller events, such as the entry into Paris. The success of the events depended on the proper execution of French ceremony that acted out the king's power and included performances by the king, the court, and the spectators; the Beg's role was no exception.[94] Breteuil observed, "The actions of an ambassador on the days of ceremony are serious, as each step is counted and measured. [The steps] cannot be added to or subtracted from without the direct order of the king."[95] The Persian diplomat's participation in French pageantry was key—the ambassador became a tool in Louis XIV's propaganda scheme. The Beg had to be made to follow French etiquette for the spectacle to have the desired effect of praising Louis XIV. The best way to negotiate with the foreigner was to understand his needs and accommodate whenever possible without sacrificing the show.[96] Therefore, Breteuil's understanding of Persian culture was crucial to the success of the diplomatic events.

Breteuil worked hard to understand Persian customs to avoid misunderstanding with the foreigner. During the period prior to the Persian ambassador's arrival, he studied Persian culture, religion, and foreign affairs. He read Jean Chardin's *Voyages du chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient*. Breteuil also read another popular

work describing the ambassadorial visit of Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa, a Spaniard, to Persia.[97] In addition to his own research, the *introducteur* had people around him familiar with Persian traditions, and it was normal to have a specialist in his entourage to advise him. Breteuil could rely on the expertise of Padery, the current interpreter, and Jean Richard, the French Lazariste missionary who had arranged the Persian visit on behalf of the Safavid Shah.[98]

Breteuil's memoirs depict the ambassador as resistant to French codes of behavior from the moment he arrived in Marseille on January 26, 1715.[99] The Beg and his hosts shared an understanding that French protocol signified the precedence of the Bourbon monarch and his courtiers over foreign guests. However, the Beg resisted cooperating with that protocol. Breteuil's knowledge allowed him to interpret the Beg's resistance as a politically motivated attempt to avoid deference to French protocol.

As Breteuil describes the first quarrel over ceremony, the financier and court figure François Pidou de Saint Olon was charged with the task of greeting and accompanying the Persian to Paris, and this *gentilhomme ordinaire de la chambre du roi* was the first to get to know the Beg. Saint Olon's experience as ambassador to Genoa from 1682 to 1684 and envoy *extraordinaire* to Morocco in 1693 had provided him with a background in diplomatic affairs and experience dealing with Muslim foreigners.[100] Yet Saint Olon was unable to persuade the ambassador to behave according to French protocol.

Saint Olon's stories of the Beg's confrontational conduct reached Breteuil's ears. In one incident, the ambassador was outraged when he learned that the customs officials in Marseilles had tampered with the presents, which he intended for Louis XIV and had sent six months in advance of his arrival under the care of Hagopdjan de Deritchan, an Armenian merchant. It is unclear who opened the presents, as both Hagopdjan and the Marseille customs officials were targets of accusations, but of course, the French blamed the Armenian.[101] Either way, the incident first revealed to the French the Beg's feisty character, his hot temper, and his willingness to defend his interests by any means. Breteuil, describing himself as an adept negotiator, intensified his efforts to negotiate with the Beg over matters of ceremony.

When Breteuil finally arrived to meet the Beg, he found the ambassador unwilling to extend any of the usual civilities. The French court expected the Beg to stand upon receiving high-ranking Frenchmen. However, he had already refused on the basis that his religion disallowed him from standing to welcome a Christian.[102] Breteuil described himself as a skilled diplomat who endeavored to persuade the ambassador through interpreters to greet him according to French proper etiquette. The interpreters, intimidated by the Beg's temper, advised Breteuil to compromise; in the end, the Persian ambassador feigned a fever that permitted him to receive the *introducteur* lying down. The Beg's evasion of courtesy mirrored that of French courtiers, who commonly pretended to be ill to avoid civilities when receiving people. The Duc de Saint-Simon describes in his court memoirs the example of the Prince de Vaudémont, who used the excuse of his illness and bad legs to avoid paying civilities to high-ranking court members.[103] Breteuil, fully aware of the ruse, nevertheless agreed to meet with the prone ambassador.[104] Breteuil understood that the meaning behind his resistance was not cultural but a political matter: the ambassador wished to maintain the precedence of Persia, which he would lose if he followed French protocol.

Indeed, Breteuil tried to separate cultural matters from political challenges to the king's authority. He made alterations that honored the ambassador's culture whenever affairs of state, such as precedence, were not involved. For example, Breteuil took into account Islamic traditions even before the Beg's arrival when he decorated the *hôtel des ambassadeurs*, where the ambassador would live during his stay in Paris. "The Persian religion," he writes in his journal, "does not forbid them from having painted images of men and women in a palace . . . and the ambassador's residence was decorated with beautiful tapestries . . . I had placed in the room where the ambassador prayed a green velvet tapestry with golden embroidery."[105]

Breteuil and the court also met the Beg's demands when out of the public eye. In private meetings and settings, staging lost importance and changes to French etiquette did not harm the image of the monarchy. For example, the French crown showed a willingness to make adjustments to suit the ambassador's trepidations about the February moon. When the *introducteur* related to the ambassador that the audience at Versailles would take place on February 13, the Beg announced his displeasure at having the reception during an unfavorable astrological period. Breteuil explained that he had no authority to change the date of the audience with the king, but he would ask Louis XIV to do so. The Beg did not wait for Breteuil to meet with the king and sent his interpreters, along with his mullah, to present the problem to the Marquis de Torcy, who was minister of foreign affairs. Torcy then came with Breteuil to meet with the Beg.[106]

The fact that the Beg brought his problem directly to Torcy, Breteuil's superior, revealed he had some appreciation for French court hierarchy and procedure. The Marquis de Torcy and Louis XIV, in turn, exhibited consideration for Persian culture when they moved the day of the audience to accommodate the ambassador's request. Torcy wrote to Breteuil describing how the king "was touched by the grief [the ambassador] suffered over the bad influence of the moon" and how the king "himself decided to change the date of the audience to the Tuesday of the following week."[107] The French officials and the Persian embassy understood each other and could agree on a new date. The Beg's request was not interpreted as a political challenge: a change in date of the audience would not affect the king's image and could be handled in private without the pressures of spectacle.

By the same token, Breteuil could not honor the Beg's wishes when they involved changes to ceremony that might threaten the monarchy's reputation and ultimately, the crown's projection of power, as well as his own image. He feared that the Beg's resistance to French codes of conduct would continue to pose a problem throughout his stay and threaten the public performance of French power. Breteuil needed a pretext to hide any of the Beg's potential challenges to Louis XIV's authority that he might fail to prevent, hence he prepared his readers by describing the Beg as temperamental:

> He is a man of esteem in his country, magnificent and vain to excess, but polite and gracious when he wishes to please. He has all the wit that one could have, and a temper beyond what one can describe: once his head begins to heat up, he quickly passes to incensed anger. Nature has given him the tone of voice of a bull that makes his anger even more terrifying in such a way that during the journey from Marseille to Paris, when he fell into fits of anger, he caused everyone around him to tremble.[108]

Before they embarked for Paris from Marseille, the issue of standing to greet a Frenchmen reappeared, as Breteuil and the Beg disagreed over the welcoming ritual—a small but crucial matter of French ceremony that the ambassador had already tried to avoid upon their first meeting. The explosive issue was whether the ambassador must stand to greet Breteuil and the Maréchal de Matignon (who joined the *introducteur* to escort the ambassador to Paris) when they arrived in his room to take him into the city. The Beg had claimed to be ill the first time he received Breteuil, but this time the Frenchmen insisted upon a proper reception. The ambassador disappointed Breteuil once again by insisting that his religious beliefs did not allow him to stand to receive Christians. But now Breteuil would not concede to the ambassador on the issue of standing, especially since by this time he had conferred with Gaudereau, who had spent a great deal of time in Persia and had seen Persians indeed customarily stand to greet Christians.[109]

Breteuil understood that the ambassador's religious excuses masked a political standoff. The Beg refused to participate in any ceremony that suggested French primacy but Breteuil could not acquiesce this time. Conflict had to be avoided as he still needed to negotiate with the ambassador and, therefore, had to offer him a respectable way out of the situation. He exhibited consideration for the Beg's right of precedence by offering him ways of following French codes that would also maintain Persian honor. He proposed that the Beg could avert the problem of ceremony by meeting the Maréchal and himself at the carriage. Breteuil writes, "I told him that if he wished to avoid all ceremony, he could descend the stairs by himself to the carriage where the Maréchal and I would be waiting. . . . He [the ambassador] refused to do that and related to me how he had been informed that the Maréchal and I must go upstairs and sit in his room, where he would serve us coffee and tea" according to Persian protocol.[110] Breteuil responded that they would be happy to join him upon the condition that he stood upon their arrival in his room.[111] Again the Beg rejected the idea: "He flatly refused to do it under the same pretext that his faith forbade it."[112]

Breteuil, in another attempt to reach a compromise, suggested that the ambassador stand just before they enter and take a few steps in his room toward the carriage. That way he would be standing in order to leave for the carriage, not to receive his Christian guests. In recounting this incident in his memoirs, Breteuil once again reminds his readers of the Beg's temper—a potential excuse for the Beg's opposition to rituals of French power. He stresses the ambassador's vehement and repeated refusals to all of his suggestions, and notes that the Beg spoke "with a tone of such anger and rage."[113] At this point, the stakes were high for both Breteuil and the Beg—neither wished to reduce his own reputation and the status of his country by forgoing his own code of protocol in favor of a foreign one.

Breteuil decided to threaten the ambassador into agreeing to his terms. "I was obliged to tell him that if he did not want to perform the courtesy that [we] requested of him, which was certainly the least that [we] could have expected of him, he would not make the entry into Paris. If he did not perform the entry, there would be no audience with the king, and he could not present the letter from the shah of Persia."[114] Breteuil knew that the Persian ambassador had to meet with Louis XIV or risk his own position in Persia; therefore, Breteuil assumed that the ambassador would agree to the compromise. However, the Beg held his ground. At this point, Breteuil describes him as "far

from listening to reason, his rage and stubbornness to comply increasing," reminding his readers of the Beg's exotic temperament.

Breteuil devised a strategy with the Maréchal de Matignon, who was waiting by the carriage.[115] They decided to trick the ambassador by pretending to leave without him, "convinced that the ambassador, who no longer had even a pot or a bowl in Charenton because he had sent everything in the morning ahead to Paris, would rather die of hunger than eat something that had been prepared by Christians . . . would beg us to come back once he had seen us leave."[116]

According to Breteuil's story, the ambassador had become so unmanageable that he was forced to resort to trickery to win the battle over displays of power. He had to try everything possible to avoid the embarrassment of having to concede French ceremony. But his plan was foiled when the Persian diplomat moved to jump on a horse as soon as Breteuil left his room. Forewarned, Breteuil "seized the bridle of his [the ambassador's] horse and told him that [he] would certainly make him dismount."[117] The episode reached a climax when, "incensed by rage, he [the ambassador] asked . . . for his sword from the page who had carried it and had already been near him by the horse."[118] Breteuil "coolly watched [the ambassador] attach his sword to his side and place his hand on the hilt" and prepare to ride off.[119] "Fortunately," writes Breteuil, "in that moment, I found at my side two guards of the provost of the marine, who had accompanied the ambassador from Marseille."[120] Breteuil "ordered them to close the doors to the garden and prevent the ambassador and any of his men from leaving. He [the ambassador] . . . thinking that I wanted to hold him prisoner, threw himself with great fury off the horse and ran to place himself in the armchair where I had first seen him upon arriving."[121]

Breteuil, who characterized himself as quick-thinking, unintimidated, resolute, and mindful of the reputation of his own monarch, cornering the ambassador in his room and repeated his threat that the meeting with the king would be called off. At these words, the Beg became so excited that "he summoned six of his riflemen, who entered the room and surrounded [Breteuil], guns fastened."[122] Still, Breteuil held his ground, returning the ambassador's threats with greater ones: "I told [the Beg] through the interpreter that, with one whistle blow, I could summon six hundred and six thousand if it was needed, and finally I forced him to conform with the orders that I had from the king. Since I was becoming excited as well, he did not have a means to back out. And, finally, I seized him by his jacket buttons and made him stand up despite himself." Breteuil then summoned the Maréchal, and the scene ended with the Beg running into the carriage, where he was soon joined by his two French escorts. All the way to Paris, the ambassador remained stubbornly and insolently silent.[123]

The heated confrontation over standing shows that the conflict between the French officials and the Persian ambassador was based not on cultural misunderstanding but on similar yet conflicting political goals: both wanted to maximize the prestige of their monarch. Breteuil correctly construed the actions of the ambassador as a defiance of the French monarchy. The Beg may not have understood the fine points of French protocol, but he did understand that giving up his own diplomatic traditions in favor of foreign ones meant yielding power. In the end, both Breteuil and the Beg understood the performance of power inherent in ceremony. However, the *introducteur* required an excuse to cover up the Beg's challenge to French supremacy, and the ambassador's temperament, which Breteuil characterized as "exotic," served this purpose.

Despite the feud over ceremony, reconciliation was in the best interest of both Breteuil and the Beg. The failure of the mission would have undermined the diplomatic goals of each country and also damaged the individual reputations of Breteuil and the Beg at their home courts. In order to show that there were no ill feelings toward Breteuil after the quarrel, the Beg made a sign of friendship in accordance with Persian tradition: "The ambassador made up with me, touched me on the hand in his [Torcy's] presence, and gave me an orange as a symbol of peace."[124] Breteuil interpreted the hospitable gesture correctly, and he writes that "since that time, not only were we the best friends in the world, but I was [the Beg's] only source of comfort during the troubles he subsequently had."[125]

## Competition for Grandeur Between France and Persia

Breteuil's story of the Persian embassy not only points to an understanding over the mutual goal of preeminence but also suggests a comparison between the two monarchies. Frenchmen had to regard Persians as comparable to themselves for their precedence over Persian officials to have any significance. During the seventeenth century, Frenchmen had held Persia in high esteem and envisioned it as civilized, much like France. Breteuil relied on texts about Persia that represented it as a land of "civility" and more sympathetic to Christianity than the Ottoman Empire.[126] Therefore, it is not surprising that Breteuil believed the Safavid Empire outranked other Asian monarchies and warranted greater honors. He wrote, "The king of Persia is a significant enough monarch that we would increase rather than reduce the honors paid to his ambassadors, especially because not since Charlemagne has an emperor of Persia sent an embassy to the kings of France."[127] Since this was the first Persian visit to France during Louis XIV's reign, Breteuil argued for a luxurious atmosphere for the ambassador's reception at Versailles: "I . . . pointed out to His Majesty that this ambassador came on behalf of the most magnificent monarch of the Orient, the emperor of the oldest empire in the world."[128]

French respect for the Persian Empire generated a comparison between the two. The French monarchy had revealed its desire to compare itself with Oriental empires generally, not just Persia, during the preparations and décor for audiences of Oriental diplomats at Versailles. Much as with previous Oriental visits, Louis XIV, Breteuil, and the other court officials designed the details of the Beg's visit to showcase Louis XIV as a powerful monarch who mirrored or even surpassed his Asian equivalents. For this occasion, Louis XIV again made use of Asian props, such as a throne placed at the end of the Hall of Mirrors, and also wore an outfit trimmed with diamonds, comparable to the diamond suit he had worn for the Siamese embassy in 1686.[129] To match his glittering costume, Louis XIV commanded his courtiers to dress magnificently, to compete with the finery of the Persian court. He ordered the women to wear their best dresses of a certain style, *robe de chambre*, and to place many decorative stones in their hair.[130] The imitation of foreign customs present in receptions of Oriental visitors suggests French efforts to compete. Persia's particular reputation as one of the most highly regarded of all

Oriental empires meant that the French could improve their status by having a Persian guest bend to their monarch; France could claim superiority over a powerful and civilized empire like Persia by taking precedence in ceremonial performances.

During the Persian embassy's audience at Versailles, the high point of the visit, Breteuil once again could not prevent the Beg's affronts to French ceremony. Contrary to French custom, the ambassador approached the monarch and handed the letter directly to Louis XIV himself.[131] To make matters worse, the ambassador remained silent instead of starting the meeting with the usual speech to praise Louis XIV. An ambassador had never before started the discourse by silently handing over the letter, noted Breteuil, and it was highly unusual not to compliment the king in a speech. These minor slips in protocol did not go unnoticed by the French courtiers, who were used to observing ceremony, as they lived their daily lives by it. The Duc de Saint-Simon records in his diary all the improprieties of the ambassador at the audience and notes that the Beg "appeared completely bewildered by the magnificence, and . . . lost his temper with the interpreter." Saint-Simon further writes that the ambassador's "behavior was as disgraceful as his wretched suite and miserable presents."[132]

Breteuil either had to provide a good reason for the ambassador's errors or show that the blunders were out of his control. Breteuil, trying to excuse the ambassador's slips in terms of cultural differences, explained to the King, on behalf of the ambassador, that it was the custom in Persia for the monarch to always speak first. This explained the Beg's initial silence while passing the letter.[133]

Breteuil explained the Beg's actions in terms of cultural disparity to conceal the similarity of goals between the Persians and the French that resulted in the clashes described so far. Breteuil's story reminds us that comparable ideas of court ceremony triggered conflicts between Persia and France akin to fights over precedence between European states. However, instead of admitting that the Beg's behavior was comparable to defiant acts by European ambassadors and recognizing his challenge to French power, Breteuil excused his conduct based on his differences: the Beg's exotic codes of behavior and temperament. Cultural misunderstanding did not cause the disagreements, but it served as a perfect excuse for the Beg's actions and distraction from political conflict. Careful study of diplomatic confrontations reveals that commensurability did exist between early modern European and Asian countries, and at times it was this similarity, not hostility, that triggered conflicts.[134]

## Staging Grandeur

Descriptions of Oriental visits lend important insight into French representations of the Orient, the staging of absolutism, and international relations. Oriental embassies created sensations in France and produced a great array of writings and engravings. While France learned about the customs of the visiting foreigners, the king took advantage of the opportunity to spin his propaganda scheme. Yet these visits also produced a variety of problems for the court to manage. The memoirs of the *introducteurs* served as precedent for when questions of accommodation and matters of protocol appeared in future diplomatic visits. If the court did not accommodate cultural differences, diplomacy could fail as well as sour the king's image. The issues that arose over the gifts and the

*lettres de créance* show that both the French and the foreign representatives understood the stakes of spectacle and precedence. Louis XIV shared similar goals with his Oriental guests: both aspired to display royal power through ceremony and spectacle.

French encounters with Asians suggested not French superiority but French insecurity. Sainctot and Breteuil depict the difficulty that the court faced when presented with Asian guests and, in the process, expose the French crown's self-consciousness. Louis XIV and his courtiers went to great lengths to impress foreigners, maintain French prestige, and portray the king as an absolute monarch who was as powerful in his own dominion as the foreign emperors were abroad. However, in the end, imitation of Oriental customs created a lasting image of Louis XIV in his diamond suit that only fed his critics' appraisal of him as an Oriental-style despot.

The visit of the Persian ambassador in 1715 highlights many of the general problems with Oriental visits. Because the Persian ambassador came from a court similar to France, where the king openly flaunted wealth and pomp to maintain an image, the court had to work hard to impress him with a luxurious display of power. Persia, with a reputation for civility, courtliness, and luxury, warranted an even more lavish show that might otherwise be expected.

When Breteuil and the French court greeted Mohammad Reza Beg, they presumed that the Beg would perform French rituals that honored Louis XIV. Jacques Derrida suggests that diplomacy stems from hospitality, in that one country (in this case France) acts as a host to a foreign guest. Hospitality is never an even exchange but one in which the host imposes certain rules and restrictions over the guest.[135] In 1715, the diplomatic encounter enacted on French soil meant that French diplomatic practices prevailed over Persian ones. Yet despite Breteuil's efforts to convince Mohammad Reza Beg to follow French ceremonial rules, the Beg resisted and failed to participate in the performance of the Sun King's power.

The French and the Persians both desired the same effect from the visit—grandeur—and came into conflict because of this common goal. Their shared interest resulted in arguments over precedence. The ambassador's struggle to include Persian cultural practices during the course of the visit signaled an effort to maintain the dignity of the Persian monarchy and its superiority to its French equivalent. Breteuil, for his part, understood the Beg's acts correctly as challenges to the king's power but ultimately could not tolerate them. Breteuil could allow the Beg to dispute the precedence of France over Persia in private moments but certainly could not allow it during the public performances of French rituals. The spectacular nature of the visit raised the stakes and resulted in political conflict, for neither the ambassador nor the French court could compromise or they would lose status in front of the audience. Breteuil had no choice but to cover up the struggle for power by emphasizing cultural difference and the exoticism of the Persian ambassador.

Further, not only did the court host a foreign ambassador unaccustomed to European etiquette, but the monarchy also had to deal with a more critical French audience. After a long war and renewed religious troubles directed at the Jansenists, France was exhausted and had grown weary of the conservative, elderly king.[136] Impressing his own courtiers along with the obstinate Persian ambassador proved a difficult task for Louis XIV and his officials, especially his *introducteur*, the Baron de Breteuil.

Like Michel, Breteuil looked into the Persian mirror and received a reflection of political similarities as opposed to cultural differences. Both men viewed Persia with ideas of French monarchy and rituals; therefore, the image of Persia returned back to them looked much like France. Breteuil, however, used cultural differences to deflect criticism away from himself and the French court, blaming the Beg for mistakes and spoiled negotiations. Despite the French court's unsuccessful efforts to stage the diplomatic event according to protocol, the Beg's visit ultimately brought Persia into focus in the last year of Louis XIV's reign and left him indelibly associated with the luxurious yet degenerating Safavid Empire.

5

# Images of Mohammad Reza Beg

## *Fashioning the Ambassador*

The visit of Mohammad Reza Beg to Paris in 1715 fascinated French readers, consumers of engravings, and the general public who witnessed his processions and outings in Paris and other French cities. Crowds swarmed around the ambassador to catch a glimpse of him, and courtiers lined up to pay him a personal visit. Louis XIV and his staff encouraged this interest through elaborate preparations and lavish amounts of money spent on the event to glorify the monarchy.[1] Engravings portrayed the Beg in both public outings and private settings and offered the French public an opportunity to fantasize about the ambassador and his native Persia and to contrast the foreign country with their own.

The depictions of the Beg underlined the ambassador's behavior and dress for consumers interested in the exotic, but by 1715 Persia could be considered exotic but within boundaries, as French readers were already familiar with the country through travel texts and costume prints.[2] These preexisting texts and prints in turn inspired images of the Beg and influenced the representation of his visit.

Many of the images that showed him smoking, bathing, and wearing luxurious outfits stimulated trends in French fashion and culture. The seventeenth century marked new patterns of conspicuous consumption in early modern Europe, especially in England and France. In France, consumers bought and consumed goods, such as coffee and expensive fabrics that previously had been considered exotic but by the time of the Beg's visit in 1715 had been adapted to the French.[3]

The engravings portraying the ambassador outside of Versailles distinguish him as a foreigner with elite tastes similar to the French, tempering the Beg's exoticism. The depictions of the Beg are more than just mere evidence that the French consumed the exotic; they also reflect how French printers projected the exotic to suit French tastes.

## Sources for the Prints: Royal Propaganda

Engravers recorded the Beg's visit in the tradition of advertising momentous royal occasions. Historical scenes were popular subjects for engravings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Printers illustrated scenes of victory, the signing of treaties, and the conquests of new lands, documenting the reigns of Henri IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV. Almanacs or calendars were an important means of distributing prints and

were issued by printers located on the rue Saint-Jacques, the main printing district of Paris.[4] With the personal reign of Louis XIV, almanacs appeared more regularly and became more tightly bound to the crown's propaganda. French diplomats presented ornately decorated calendars to foreign princes to publicize the momentous feats of the Bourbon monarchy. Almanacs came in small leaflets that comprised a calendar accompanied by astrological predictions and anecdotes. Another popular form of the almanac consisted of single sheets that could be fixed to a wall. These were sold in great numbers to a broad popular audience across Paris and other major cities.[5]

Almanacs and prints illustrated the most important diplomatic moments of Louis XIV's reign, such as the Siamese embassy of 1686.[6] Likewise, the Persian ambassador's visit was visually recorded primarily in prints and almanacs, some of which are analyzed here.[7] Medals were another form of propaganda used by the monarchy to glorify Louis XIV and by French enemies, such as the Dutch, to criticize the king. Medals sold at different price points and could reach more than just a wealthy clientele.[8] There is evidence that medals commemorating the Persian visit were designed but never materialized. Blandine Bouret cites a sketch for a medal by Bouchardon that is mentioned in the Archives de l'Institut de France. She suggests that the reason for the abandonment of the medal project featuring the Beg's visit could have been the lack of interest in the Persian visit under the Regency government. Medals continued to be struck for diplomatic visits, such as for the visit of Mehemet Efendi in 1721.[9]

Paintings did mark the visit of the Beg, such as "Louis XIV Receives the Persian Ambassador," recently attributed to Nicolas de Largillière, and portraits of the ambassador by Antoine Watteau and Antoine Coypel (discussed later in this chapter). Yet prints remained the chief means of distributing images of the Beg.[10]

Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's leading minister and chief promoter of court arts, was well aware of the importance and popularity of engravings and kept the industry under tight control through strict censorship laws. In 1670, the monarchy passed a law mandating that any prints of maps, royal houses, paintings, plants and animals, and antique figures could only be done by certain engravers to whom the royal administration granted special rights.[11] Engraving, like painting and sculpture, came under Colbert's project of royal intervention in the arts to encourage France's artistic and intellectual growth.[12]

The creation of a royal press further strengthened the link between Louis XIV's government and the printing industry. Through Colbert's establishment of the *Cabinet du Roi*, the king not only amassed one of the largest engraving collections but also became one of the greatest patrons of the Parisian printing industry.[13] The royal printing enterprise that produced the *Cabinet du Roi* was located on the rue Vivienne and consisted of several presses. The collection advanced the glory of the monarchy through images of military conquests and celebrations and created a body of work that signified the magnificence of French artistic achievement. This included not just prints of historical events but also experimental engravings that depicted new subjects, such as flowers and plants, architectural drawings, and profiles of towns.[14]

The *Cabinet du Roi* employed many artists and developed into an expensive venture, especially while the king was its only customer. In order to finance the operation, Colbert sold the engraving plates in 1679 to outside printers, who reproduced them in cheap editions for public sale.[15] Apart from the *Cabinet du Roi*, printers bought or

produced their own plates of the Persian ambassadorial visit and sold the engravings for profit. Images of Mohammad Reza Beg at Versailles would have been a popular commodity. Louis XIV and his *introducteur des ambassadeurs*, the Baron de Breteuil, arranged a magnificent spectacle for the audience of the Persian ambassador, thereby created a particularly stunning subject for engravers. The Beg's audience was one of the rare royal events to unfold in the lavish Hall of Mirrors with splendidly dressed courtiers. The king had only received two other embassies in the ornate hall: the Doge of Genoa in 1685 and the Siamese in 1686.

In addition to the grand display at Versailles, other aspects of the Beg's visit made it an intriguing event for printers. Louis XIV spent huge sums of money to ensure that his Persian guest was kept in splendor, not just to impress the Beg and his retinue but also to attract the attention of journalists, courtiers, and engravers. The crown gave five hundred pounds of silver per day to support the ambassador and his entourage; the Armenian merchant Hagopdjan de Deritchan, who came with the ambassador to transport and guard the gifts from Persia, received a separate stipend. Additional costs included serving dinners for interpreters and guests of the ambassador at the *hôtel des ambassadeurs*. According to Breteuil's memoirs, the king spent at least 1,000 francs per day to cover the ambassador's stay in Paris.[16]

In addition to these expenditures, Louis XIV made special arrangements for the Persian ambassador at the *hôtel des ambassadeurs* that added to the cost of maintaining him. The king ordered a bath and a steam room built for his foreign guest, which led to the construction of a pipe system in the *hôtel*, as originally there was no running water in the building; the cost was 10,000 francs. During the ambassador's stay in Marseilles, the king loaned him 24,000 livres, and he even made the unprecedented gesture of paying off the debts the ambassador had accumulated in the Ottoman Empire. "I believe," reflected Breteuil, "that this is the only example that exists, among the courts of Europe, in which the sovereign paid the particular debts of an ambassador."[17] Louis's attempt to maintain the Beg in the highest standard of luxury was understood as an investment in the overall image of the French monarchy.

There was a fairy-tale aspect to this particular visit. The ambassador came from a faraway Asian land, providing a perfect opportunity for the king to advertise his worldly greatness. Artists, for example, depicted the king with a globe and described him in global terms. A medal struck for the treaty of Nijmegen called him the "universal peacemaker," and at the Place des Victoires an inscription mentioned the ambassadorial visits of distant lands, such as Siam, Morocco, and Muscovy.[18] The visit of the Persian ambassador offered a last chance for the king to display himself on a world stage.

## The Exotic as Familiar

Part of the appeal of the Beg was, of course, the spectacular nature of his visit and his exoticism. The French had never seen a Persian diplomat up close. Breteuil described the huge crowds that gathered around the ambassador.[19] Engravers capitalized on the curiosity of the French public to see what the foreigner looked like, how he interacted with the king, and how he behaved. A testament to the interest in the Persian visitor is Antoine Watteau's series of drawings of the ambassador and his entourage. Some of

these drawings were reproduced as engravings in a collection by a patron and friend of Watteau, Jean de Jullienne.[20] Oriental visitors had generated excitement in the past. The Siamese embassy of 1686, for example, sparked immense interest and became the subject of numerous prints and volumes of the *Mercure galant*, a journal popular among the upper classes.[21]

The French eagerly consumed anything related to the exotic Orient, from luxury goods to texts.[22] The popularity of Oriental travel literature attested to the ethnographic taste of the French. Furetière, author of the *Dictionnaire Universel*, recorded that by 1690 presses had printed more than 1,300 travel texts.[23] In seventeenth-century France, the word *curiosité* referred to the desire to see and learn about new, secret, rare, and unusual things.[24] The buyers of the engravings were the *curieux* and the *honnêtes hommes*, who, according to Furetière's dictionary entries, desired to learn, travel, read rare books, and see marvelous things.[25] This sophisticated group consumed travel literature and collected engravings and other curiosities on Oriental subjects.[26]

Engravers recorded the Persian ambassador in private settings outside the official diplomatic events as well. While French audiences were already well acquainted with images of Persia, the prints of the Beg underlined the foreignness of the ambassador's manners, costume, and food habits. Persian and other Oriental styles of dress had already been absorbed into French fashion to some extent, but his bathing habits offered something more exotic—soaking would not become customary among the upper classes until later in the eighteenth century. The Beg was also associated with coffee and smoking, things familiar to and already adopted by the French.[27] Altogether, these images revealed a tension between the exotic and familiar, reflecting contemporary debates about French culture.

The prints were not snapshots of the Persian visit but products of a long French tradition of scholarship on and interest in Persia. Indeed, the Parisian printers may never have seen the ambassador in the *hôtel des ambassadeurs*, and certainly never saw him in his bath. The engravers probably never saw the Beg at all. Printers and engravers relied on French journals, such as the *Mercure galant* and the *Journal de Verdun,* to provide accounts of the ambassador's visit. However, they also drew on travel journals and earlier engravings.

Costume prints, a popular genre since the sixteenth century, showed Europeans what foreigners looked like and how they lived. Costumes offered the means to identify and categorize foreigners. Traveler's journals like Nicolas de Nicolay's *The Navigations and Peregrinations and Voyages Made into Turkey*, published in the late sixteenth century, contained costume prints of the Ottoman Empire and Persia.[28] In the seventeenth century, Jean Chardin included engravings of Persian costumes, customs, and architecture in his *Travels in Persia*. He requested Guillaume-Joseph Grelot, an engraver whom he had met in the Ottoman Empire, to draw for him during the journey.[29] Another example of a traveler who included Persian clothing in his images is Adam Olearius, whose text became known to the French with Abraham van Wicquefort's translation of his travelogue in 1656.[30] An example of a late seventeenth-century traveler who included prints of Persian dress is Cornelis de Bruyn, the Dutch voyager whose work and prints on Persia were also distributed in France.[31] Printers such as Henri Bonnart and his family created images of other foreigners from around the world, including Chinese Turks, and

Persians.[32] Their costume prints provided a wide variety of visual sources for printers to draw from for their representations of Mohammad Reza Beg in 1715.

The print "The King and Queen of Persia," published in 1715 at the time of Mohammad Reza Beg's visit, reveals how French printers created images of foreigners (see Figure 5.1).[33] The dress of the monarchs mixes fantasy and reality. The queen is imagined in a stylized headpiece that appears to be a version of a hennin-style hat, which consisted of a cone or truncated cone worn by European women of the nobility in the late Middle Ages. Her costume resembles French dresses in vogue in the late seventeenth century that incorporated exotic fabrics and patterns. The king wears a type of Persian headdress that is stylized with a cylindrical top piece that matches the queen's hat. The king dons the Persian jacket, the *justaucorps*, that France had already absorbed from Persia and which had become an outfit identifiable with the French court. The most obvious element of fabrication is the king's face, for he resembles representations of Shah Abbas I, such as the engraving of the Safavid monarch that appears in a costume book edited by Jollain in 1660.[34] The king appears little like the reigning Safavid king, Shah Husayn, who is depicted with a full beard in images such as the print by the Dutch traveler Cornelis de Bruyn (see Figure 5.2).[35]

The French journals *Mercure galant* and *Journal de Verdun* provided current accounts of the ambassador and his visit with the king that printers used to create images. The *Mercure galant*, started in 1672 by Jean Donneau de Visé and appearing monthly by 1715, became widely read, primarily among the Parisian nobility.[36] This journal provided details of the visit of the ambassador to Versailles. The *Journal de Verdun* (also known as the *Journal historique sur les matières du tems*), edited by Claude Jordan from 1707 to 1716, offered details of the ambassador's exotic habits and luxurious clothing.

Travel journals provided additional textual sources on Persia for the engravers. Author, such as Pietro della Valle, François Bernier, and Jean Baptiste Tavernier published their accounts of the Ottoman Empire, India, and Persia. Jean Chardin focused on Persia in his *Coronation of Soleiman*, published in 1671, and again in his *Voyages*, which recorded his two long stays in the country in 1666 and 1672, first published in 1686 and reprinted in 1711.[37] By 1715, Chardin's popular work was still the main reference work on Persia. The Baron de Breteuil specifically consulted Chardin to prepare for the Beg's visit.[38]

Some of the images, such as one depicting the ambassador eating, must have relied heavily on Chardin's text. As it is unlikely that the printers or authors of the French journals ever witnessed the ambassador's meals, they would have had to refer to Chardin's description of how and what the ambassador was most likely to eat. Chardin devoted one entire chapter to Persian cooking and another to Persian drinks and stimulants, including coffee and opium, which provided the printers with details for their images.

Chardin admired much about Persian food. He notes that Persians only eat two meals a day, the first of which consists of fruit, dairy products, and jams. From Chardin, the reader learns about the unparalleled variety and quality of fruits in Persia: "I was at a dinner in Isfahan, where there were more than fifty kinds of fruit, and some brought from three to four hundred leagues away. We do not see anything like it in France."[39] He describes, to name a few examples, melons, cucumbers, eggplant, grapes, apples, pears, plums, and dates, which he calls "one of the best fruits in the world, they are nowhere so good as in Persia."[40] He also recalls their variety of nuts, including pistachios, almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, and filberts.[41]


*Figure 5.1* The king and queen of Persia appear in this French print as similar to Europeans, especially in their dress. Frenchmen were eager to see images of the Persian monarchy during the visit of the Persian embassy to France in 1715. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*


*Figure 5.2* Shah Husayn of Persia portrayed in 1718 by a European traveler. Husayn was the last Safavid shah and in 1722 abdicated the throne to an Afghan ruler. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

Conversely, Chardin also lauds Persian simplicity. He notes that their dinner "consists of fruit and herb soups, a roast, baked, or pan-fried, or spit-roasted: eggs, vegetables, & *pilo*, which is also their most delicious food and their daily bread."[42] He remarks that the meals do not require extra salt or pepper, which, unlike the French, they leave off the table. "I admire the equality of their tastes in eating . . . they do not put pepper, salt, oil, or vinegar at their tables: everyone has a simple taste and likes the same things."[43] Here Chardin contrasts the Persian style of eating, whereby everyone enjoys the same foods, with the Europeans custom that calls for each individual to spice the food to suit their own taste.

## Symbols of the Exotic

Exotic behavior, such as Persian table manners, daily bathing, exercise, and frequent smoking often formed the subject of the prints. From these prints, we learn what intrigued the French about Persia and the objects and habits that became associated with being Persian. The printers selected certain symbols from existing travel literature to represent the ambassador's exoticism. These objects were not chosen at random but were included in the images due to their special association with Persia and their significance to French identity.

One example of exotica is the ambassador's water pipe or *qalyan*. The engraving of the Beg smoking (see Figure 5.3), produced by an anonymous artist on the rue Saint-Jacques by the editor Landry, focuses on the ambassador sitting with his pipe.[44] Jean Chardin's similar print, entitled "Persian Smoking the *Callion*," most likely provided inspiration for the print of the Beg. But the Beg also smoked frequently during his visit to France.

The Baron de Breteuil expressed surprise that the ambassador requested the carriages to slow down during his journey from Paris to Versailles in order for him to smoke his pipe comfortably: "At about halfway through the trip, the ambassador requested that we move slowly so that he could have the comfort of smoking."[45] Breteuil was struck by the ambassador's unusual method of taking his tobacco: "The manner is very unique: outside the carriage, a slave holds the glass vase, upon which sits his tobacco and fire which he lights and by the means of a long, meandering, leather flue that is attached to the vase. The ambassador smokes while going at the same trot as this slave follows, without the fire nor the tobacco which are on top [of the vase] falling and in case it should fall, another servant on horseback carries all along the road a little heating utensil with fire to relight the pipe."[46]

The *Journal de Verdun* further recounted that the ambassador smoked while on horseback and in public places, such as the opera: "He took the route from Marseille with his pipe which was inseparable from him, because he did not stop [smoking] even for going to the opera or comedy; he smoked during public spectacles.[47] Chardin writes, "The People of Quality have their Pipe or Callion always carry'd before them by a Servant on Horse-back; and they often stop by the way to smoke, and sometimes smoke as they ride. . . . In a word, they would rather go without their dinners than their Pipes."[48]

Other travelers, such as Jean Tavernier and Adam Olearius, confirmed the Persians' immoderate use of tobacco. Tobacco is believed to have come from the New World to


*Figure 5.3* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, was seen smoking the Persian water pipe wherever he went. Frenchmen were fascinated by the pipe, which showcased a new way of smoking. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

Safavid Persia via Europeans sometime in the sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries. In Persia, tobacco use quickly developed and spread throughout the country. As Rudi Matthee explains, by the mid-seventeenth century, Europe was decades behind Persia, where tobacco had become a commodity with mass appeal.[49] In Persia, all ranks of society smoked. What distinguished rich from poor was the manner of smoking. Water pipes signaled a higher stature, while lower classes relied on the more mobile regular pipe that allowed them to smoke at work. Those of lower rank who did select the water pipe used simple versions made of coconut shell or gourd. The rich, by contrast, required elaborately decorated instruments made of glass or crystal decorated with diamonds, silver, or gold.[50] The Beg's use of the water pipe indicated his privileged position in Persia.

In the engravings, the Beg's pipe is always present. The engraving depicting the Beg's visit to the Gobelins factory (see Figure 5.4) illustrates the Baron de Breteuil's report that the ambassador smoked while traveling. In the print of the Beg practicing his native sport (see Figure 5.5), a servant is present riding on horseback during the game holding the smoking device. In the engraving of the ambassador in his bath (see Figure 5.6), the *qalyan* rests upon a table within his or his servant's reach. In the prints, the symbol of the water pipe, used even while the ambassador rides, reinforced his elite stature and wealth to French viewers. In the Safavid Empire, a servant, called the *qalyandar*, transported the water pipe for their wealthy masters. These servants sometimes carried a kettle that maintained a fire to light the *qalyan* when needed. Cornelis de Bruyn also included an image of a Persian servant on his horse holding the *qalyan*, the kettle hanging from the horse.[51] Avid readers of French travelogues would have been aware of the significance of the pipe and its paraphernalia as status symbols in the prints and understood the Beg as a gentleman.

The water pipe and the act of smoking became symbols of the Beg's exoticism, even though the French were already familiar with Persian smoking customs from travel works and ethnographic prints. Furthermore, pipes had already been imported to the court as a curiosity. The Duc de Saint-Simon famously described an incident in which the Dauphin caught the princesses smoking a pipe at Marly.[52] Smoking was unusual in France, where tobacco consumption did not become commonplace until the mid-eighteenth century.[53] During the seventeenth century, the health benefits of smoking were the subject of much debate: Louis XIV's physician, Fagon, criticized smoking, but others believed it to have medicinal properties.[54] This suggests that an interplay between exoticism and what was already known existed in the creation of representations of the ambassador.

Another characteristic element in the engravings dwells upon the ambassador's eating habits. Guerard's image of the Beg dining (see Figure 5.7) illustrates the ambassador's foreign foods and table etiquette, appealing to Frenchmen's fascination with exotic foods and a preoccupation with manners. In the image, we see many plates with a variety of dishes in front of the ambassador. The *Journal de Verdun* described the different dishes presented in the print in great detail: "We placed many small plates in front of His Excellence [Mohammad Reza Beg], upon which was his bread, made like large flat cake [*une galette*]; we presented him with three large bowls of *pileau*, which is a type of soup or stew with lamb and saffron cooked in water."[55] The article praised the unusual, slow-cooked stew that the ambassador enjoyed: "The most exquisite and the


*Figure 5.4* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, parades through Paris to visit the Gobelins factory, where the finest French tapestries were produced. France showcased its cultural achievements to visiting ambassadors. One could ponder what the Beg thought of the French tapestries, since he came from Persia, where the finest carpets in the world were produced. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*


*Figure 5.5* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, plays a Persian game on horseback in Paris. Persia was famous for some of the best horses in the world and Persians were known to be skilled riders. Persian elites played a variety of games while riding, such as polo, which was popular throughout Asia and later brought to Europe. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*


*Figure 5.6* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, bathes while attended by his servants. The Beg captured French attention with his long and luxurious baths. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*


*Figure 5.7* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, sits cross-legged and is served many different dishes all at once. Frenchmen were entertained by the Beg's variety of foods, many of which were exotic luxuries in France. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

most delicate stews consisted of sausages made of sweetened ground beef, wrapped in bread and all cooked in butter."[56] The caption further illustrated the cuisine: "His dishes consisted of lamb, mutton, chicken, eggs, rice, butter, apples, lemons, saffron, cheese; he drinks opium, tea, coffee, and chocolate."[57] Breteuil also pointed out how the ambassador served his guests tea, coffee, and sorbet, foreign foods already known in France.[58]

The *cafetière* or coffeepot appears in several prints of the Beg, including the one of him smoking (see Figure 5.3), bathing (see Figure 5.6), and eating (see Figure 5.7) By 1715, coffee was a luxurious yet familiar drink in France.[59] In fact, coffee was so well known that Jean Chardin prefaced his discussion of coffee with a statement dismissing a need for its description. "As for coffee," he writes, "it is a beverage too well known to talk about."[60] Coffee drinking had been linked to the arrival of the Turkish ambassador in 1669.[61] However, as historians have pointed out, the interest in the drink commenced prior to the Turkish ambassador's visit.

Coffee evolved into a French drink in the second half of the seventeenth century.[62] Prior to 1669, *limonadiers*, vendors of an assortment of drinks and spirits, sold coffee. In the 1670s, treatises on coffee, such as Philippe Sylvestre Dufour's *De l'usage du caphé, du thé, et du chocolate* in 1671 and *Traitez nouveaux du café, du thé et du chocolate* in 1685, helped popularize it by launching the addition of milk to coffee to produce the café au lait.[63] Milk, a local product that appealed to the French, reduced coffee's bitter taste and strangeness.[64] By the 1680s, elites like Madame de Sevigné advocated the drink and credited it for curing health complaints. Prints in the 1670s and 1680s depicted stylish men and women drinking coffee, testifying to the association between coffee and fashionability. Cafés soon appeared, and by 1716 there were more than three hundred cafés in France.

By Mohammad Reza Beg's visit, coffee was not new, but it was nevertheless associated with the exotic. In their early years cafés had employed servers dressed as Armenians or Turks and had featured elements of Turkish décor.[65] But by 1715 cafés had distanced themselves from Orientalist connotations, which were blamed for improprieties and unruly conduct in coffeehouses. Cafés promoted an atmosphere of luxury and civility instead of the exotic to attract high-class customers who did not want to associate with scandalous activity.[66]

The coffeepot in the images of the Beg intimated the exotic and at the same time connected the Beg to what was by then a standard symbol of elite polite behavior and luxury. Coffee and luxury came together in prints of the fashionable elite consuming the drink and also in the French café, decorated in a luxurious style that included fancy chandeliers, marble tables, and mirrors.[67] Coffee allowed French viewers of the print to read the Beg as exotic but also an elite, fashionable gentlemen. The depiction of the coffeepot polishes the Beg's image by subtly distancing him from strange foreign manners and connecting him to an established, cultivated French habit. He may be an exotic foreigner, but he is also civilized. The presence of the coffeepot turned the prints of the Beg into relatable objects for French consumers and shows how objects mediated between the exotic and familiar.

The French penchant for coffee and cafés has been associated for the most part with Turkish culture.[68] However, Frenchmen were aware of coffee-drinking in Persia through travel literature and descriptions of the Persian coffeehouses specifically connote characteristics of the French café. Although Persians drank less coffee than the Ottomans,

Safavid coffeehouses suggested a leisurely atmosphere and a society able to spend on a luxury item like coffee.[69] Likewise, French cafés evoked luxury, leisure, and were in tune with new patterns of conspicuous consumption in early modern Europe.

Chardin describes Persian coffeehouses as "the most beautiful places in the city" especially because "they are the meeting place of entertainment for the inhabitants."[70] Coffeehouses in Persia, according to Chardin, were public spaces where people engaged in discussion and debate: "They make conversation; for it is there where the news is debated, and where the politicians criticize the Government freely, and without being worried about it."[71] Other travelers confirmed that poets related poems, stories, and histories in the coffeehouses. The transmission of oral literature became linked to coffeehouses, which were often set up in amphitheater style to accommodate the audience. Coffeehouses were often located in proximity to the mosque, and religious leaders also entertained the crowds there.[72] The connection between cafés and intellectual discussion would have resonated in France, where the café would be intertwined with the Enlightenment and become a crucial part of the public sphere.

Persian coffeehouses were not always associated with state-condoned amusement. Early in the seventeenth century coffeehouses in Persia, as in the Ottoman Empire and England, became places connected to political disorder. In the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Murad (r. 1566–74) had outlawed coffee after its initial dissemination, and coffeehouses were again closed in 1633–34. Shah Abbas I likewise showed concern for lewd behavior in coffeehouses. Chardin does describe Persian coffeehouses as places of sodomy and immoral activity but notes that this indecency ended by the late 1650s. Indeed, in the second half of the seventeenth century, Safavid coffeehouses became places of sanctioned entertainment.[73]

The Beg's visit marks a moment when cafés in France were shifting from markers of elite status to public centers of debate that helped shape the Enlightenment.[74] By the time of the Persian embassy, cafés had established themselves as civilized institutions and places where men of letters socialized and debated, much like in the Safavid Empire.[75] The Beg's visit allowed the French to think about the intersecting meanings behind coffee. Coffee was at once a status symbol and a social drink that inspired conversation and debate. The café brought to mind questions of freedom of speech, a topic directly raised by Jean Chardin in his discussion of Persian coffeehouses. By recalling the Persian coffeehouse as a public space, the prints offered the opportunity for Frenchmen to absorb and imitate the notion according to their own manners and ideas.

The images of the Beg projected food as symbols of French and Persian customs but also exhibited a contrast to established French mores of eating. The print of the ambassador feasting (see Figure 5.7) suggests the French preoccupation with table manners. In the prints, the ambassador completely overturns French ideas of polite dining by seating himself on the floor and eating with his fingers. His "table" is a cloth spread out on the floor. All the dishes appear before him at the same time, something remarked on by the *Journal de Verdun*.[76] Even more foreign to the French was the Beg's manner of eating with his fingers. In the engraving, the ambassador holds food up to his mouth without utensils while holding another piece of food in his left hand. "The Persian manner of eating is very messy," the Baron de Breteuil writes disparagingly, "especially when they eat from the rice, because they take it with their fingers."[77]

The Beg's disdain for knife and fork shocked the French. The Marquis de Coulanges, observing French table etiquette in the 1670s and 1680s, wrote in a song that "formerly one ate soup from a dish, without ceremony, and wiped one's spoon often on the boiled fowl. In the fricassee of those days one dipped one's bread and one's fingers. Now, each person eats his soup from his own plate. One must make polite use of spoon and fork, and from time to time a servant will wash these at the sideboard."[78] In 1729, *Les Régles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* instructed, "At table you should use a serviette, a plate, a knife, a spoon, and a fork. It would be entirely contrary to propriety to be without any of these things while eating."[79]

The *Journal de Verdun* chimed in with its own critique of the Beg's table manners: "He ate preserves, meat, and cheese in a jumbled manner with his fingers because he had neither a spoon, fork, knife, or napkin."[80] The *Journal* remarked that the ambassador honored his guests through the strange method of serving sorbet without utensils. "He served a large porcelain vase, filled with sorbet, from which he was the first to drink. Then, he passed around the rest of [the sorbet] to the French table, where each person in the circle drank the precious remainder from the same vase, which was a liqueur, in which the red beard of the Persian had probably been dipped."[81] Yet despite the odd behavior, the *Journal* highlighted the honor that the Beg wished to bestow on his guests. The *Journal* emphasized that by serving them sorbet in that exotic manner, "he wished to give the ladies and gentlemen whom he was treating a huge mark of distinction and politeness."[82] The Beg might eat like a French peasant, but in the end he displayed good manners and respect for his guests.

In the illustration of the Beg's feast, the ambassador has eight plates in front of him and is served by two footmen. The dishes are exquisitely detailed and clearly show the delicacy of Persian cuisine. The complex lines in the engravings deliberately distinguish meats, fruits, and herbs to exhibit the variety and refinement of the Beg's food. Despite the criticism of the Beg's manners related in the *Journal de Verdun* and by Breteuil, the engraving turns the Beg into a polite diner. The Beg does appear to have a napkin spread on his lap and is eating what seems to be a piece of bread with his hands, an acceptable practice even for the French. The engraving signals to the readers the difference between French and Persian dining traditions but also reminds the viewer that, despite divergences, both cultures are refined and akin in polite behavior.

Like the Beg's banquet, Mohammad Reza Beg's bathroom (see Figure 5.6) attracted immense attention. The legend of the print of the Beg bathing reads, "Mohammad Reza Beg, ambassador of Persia, bathes often in very hot water and stays there for six hours; he goes in naked with the exception of a type of shorts; he bathes with his head bare."[83] The legend adds, "The king pays 100 for each bath to Sir Buisson the bather. He actually constructed baths for him in the *hôtel des ambassadeurs*."[84]

The ambassador's unusual habit resonated with French debates over the health benefits of baths. Throughout the seventeenth century, there was a fear of immersion in water. Soaking one's body was thought to lead to chills and opened the pores to disease. In the image, the ambassador is intentionally depicted fully submerged. Only his head is visible above the water, demonstrating a soaking that some Frenchmen might find alarming. Chardin includes his discussion of bathing in his section on Persian medicine because, as he explains, "The baths are one of the great remedies of the Orientals against most diseases, as well as a way to preserve bodily cleanliness."[85] Chardin comments that

baths are especially common in Persia: "The use of Baths is not only universal but frequent in Persia, but it is more so than in any place in the East."[86] He explains the reasons for their bathing: "They go to the bath for three reasons, for religion, for health, and for neatness."[87]

Here too, the image of the Beg signals luxury. He is attended by two valets, who hold his towel, clothing, and shoes, which appear to be made of splendid, well-worked materials. The bath itself is draped by curtains that repeat the theme of luxury but, even more noteworthy, add a dramatic impression. The engraving stages the Beg in his bath as a theatrical, luxurious, and exotic scene. The opened curtains invite the spectator to share in the rare sight of a foreigner indulging in his usual bathing routine.

Bathing and soaking in the bath may have been habitual for the Persian ambassador but was more remarkable for the French. Bathing was seldom practiced even by elites in the seventeenth century. According to Pierre Goubert, posthumous inventories listed very few bathtubs during Louis XIV's reign.[88] Hydrotherapy existed in France in the middle of the seventeenth century, but doctors in Paris did not own any bathtubs.

Nobles had bathed in the mid-fifteenth century to flaunt their status and wealth, but this practice ended in the seventeenth century when garden fountains and outdoor water displays replaced private baths as displays of prestige. Fears that bathing rendered the pores of the body more open to the plague stopped people from bathing. Instead, they preferred gazing at garden baths. Georges Vigarello tells the story of Sully, Henri IV's minister, who was caught taking a bath. When told of this, the king sent a message of warning to Sully: "Monsieur, the king commands you to complete your bath, and forbids you to go out today, since . . . this would endanger your health."[89] Louis XIV also bathed with caution. The king's doctor, Fagon, bathed the king as part of an array of medical treatments that included frequent bloodletting and enemas to heal fits, rashes, and red spots on his chest. However, the doctor stopped the bath treatment because "for the rest of the day he [the king] felt weighed down with a nagging headache such as he had never experienced before, and with the whole demeanor of his body quite changed from what it had been in the preceding days."[90]

In the seventeenth century, bathing still struck the French as not only dangerous but also expensive and extravagant. In the 1670s, bathing became associated with Louis XIV and his mistress, Madame de Montespan, for whom the king had built extravagant baths in Versailles and the Trianon. Montespan favored bathing and wrote in her memoirs, "I bathe in the bath on the days when the weather is cool, and in my room when it is warm." The baths cost the king an extravagant sum and suggested exotic luxury. The Trianon de Porcelaine, for example, was built in the park of Versailles as a place of relaxation for the king and his mistress. The mix of European and Asian architectural styles evoked a fairy-tale world.[91] Considered an early evocation of what would become *chinoiserie* in the eighteenth century, the entrance, covered in porcelain tiles, imitated Chinese architecture.[92] (Representative of the relationship between Montespan and the king, the Trianon de Porcelaine would be torn down after their liason ended and replaced with the Trianon de Marbre.) Additionally, the king built the *appartement des bains* on the ground floor of Versailles for Montespan, a facility that brought to mind the ancient Roman baths.[93] The mix of different architectural styles conjured an opulent and imaginary world of leisure that was meant to please the senses.

Bathhouses had been popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though they declined in the sixteenth century. A few bathhouses remained in the seventeenth century to serve elites. However, these were considered luxurious institutions, and bathing was an excuse to hide away or escape. Madame de Sévigné, for instance, expressed suspicions about bathhouses that were associated with romantic liasons and secret affairs.[94] Montespan's baths at Versailles further deepened the correlation between baths and illicit intimacy. By contrast, the depiction of the ambassador in his bath directs the viewer away from any idea of lewdness that could be associated with the bath and seventeenth-century bathhouses. In the print, the Beg's entire body, including his neck, are neatly covered with cloth, removing any suggestion of indecency. Only the clothes that the valets hold hint at his nudity beneath the layers of fabric draped over the bathtub. Although the Beg was known as a ladies' man, the bath is associated with washing and luxury and lacks any allusions to romance.[95]

Looking at the image of the Beg in his bath, the French could reassess their relationship to bathing and reconcile their anxiety of immersion in water with the benefits of soaking demonstrated by the print. Attitudes toward bathing began to change among the French upper classes. By the second third of the eighteenth century, bathing had become acceptable among the wealthy, and baths were installed in Versailles and other houses.[96]

Bathing in the eighteenth century was associated not just with luxury and debates on health but also with status. Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Chateauroux, for example, had the king attend her baths and had visitors wait in the chamber room; the bath indicated her status as current favorite of the king. The print of the Beg's bathing, likewise, can be interpreted as a precursor to the use of the bath as status indicator. Vigarello explains that cleanliness had been a sign of distinction throughout the seventeenth century. In fact, cleanliness became inseparable from good manners and elegance, qualities necessary to any high-ranking figure.[97] The Beg's bathing indicated to French viewers that he was not only clean but of high stature. His submersion demonstrated a new type of cleanliness that would become more common as the eighteenth century progressed.

## Clothing the Beg

The prints also played up the extravagance of Persian clothing. The engraving of the ambassador smoking (see Figure 5.3) shows him in a richly patterned Persian costume. He wears the traditional robe or waistcoat that falls to his knees with sashes that tie around his waist, and over that he wears a short coat. Chardin noted that this type of Persian coat is typically "made of cloth, or gold brocade, or a thick sattin, and they daub them all over with gold or Silver-lace, or gallon, or they embroider them."[98] Breteuil added that the "the men of quality in Persia are always dressed in gold brocade."[99] Chardin described the complexity of Persian clothing and the variety of fabrics: "The stuffs they make their cloaths of are silk and cotton; the shirts and drawers are of silk; the vests and robes are lined with a thin cloth, and stuffed with cotton between them to make them warmer."[100]

The ambassador's clothing would have interested collectors of fashion prints, especially because Oriental clothing heavily influenced fashion in the seventeenth century. In fact, the prints of the Beg can be considered fashion plates themselves. Seventeenth-century fashion prints depicted activities of the upper classes and offered idealized images of peasants and merchants.[101] In the first half of the seventeenth century, costume prints depicted fashions of the past, but by 1675, fashion prints began to illustrate contemporary styles and actually impact fashion.[102] Additionally, the models in the prints often resembled famous courtiers, showcasing women and men with fashionable gestures and postures, playing music, at prayer, sitting in the park, or in the act of dressing.[103]

The images of Mohammad Reza Beg followed in the tradition of these fashion prints by portraying the ambassador in his elaborate attire performing everyday activities, such as bathing and dining, but also exercising and attending events. These engravings represented what a wealthy nobleman from Persia wore and how he spent his leisure time just as French prints depicted *gens de qualité* engaged in drinking chocolate, writing letters, and (not coincidentally) smoking. These prints reveal the luxurious clothing and furnishings that had already inspired fashion. The *Recueil des modes de la cour de France* (1678–93), a collection of costume prints by various artists, such as members of the Bonnart family, Nicolas Arnoult, Jean Berain, Jacques Le Pautre, and Jean Dieu de Saint-Jean, illustrates the Oriental styles that the French upper classes incorporated into their clothing during the latter part of the seventeenth century.[104]

The Beg's coat recurs throughout the images and serves as another symbol that both demonstrates his exoticism and at the same time associates him with French identity. By the time of the Beg's visit, Persian styles had already influenced French fashion. In 1715, men across Europe wore the *justaucorps*, a long, fitted coat.[105] It was modeled after the Persian coat, with its tight arms and close-fitting bodice, similar to the one the Beg wears in the engravings and the kinds that appears in Chardin's engravings, for instance in "Persian Smoking the *Callion.*"[106] The Persian coat that the Beg wears in the engravings is heavily embroidered with a floral pattern similar to the one elite Frenchmen wore. French viewers of fashion prints would have recognized the resemblance between the ambassador's clothing and French attire.

The embroidered fabric and coat also influenced French female attire. By the 1680s, the *mantua*, or one-piece gown, had become fashionable in France. The informal, loose-fitting gown contrasted with the formal court dress, the *grand habit*, marked by constricting boning and consisting of two pieces, a separate top and skirt.[107] Inspired by the Persian-style embroidered coat, the dress permeated fashion plates and carried Oriental connotations. The mantua owes its look to costume plates like those appearing in Chardin's *Travels*. The engraving of Persian women in the long fitted coat resembles the mantua's one-piece style. The French absorbed and adapted the exotic style of dress, making it their own but nevertheless finding its representation of difference and defiance of regulated court life attractive. Part of the appeal of the Oriental loose-fitting trend and lighter, bolder fabrics was its evocation of the gowns of the harem, serving as a subtle resistance to the rigidity of Versailles and distancing wearers from the old order.[108]

Moreover, the Persian-style coat and cloth symbolized a link between the Safavid and Bourbon crowns. In France, the *justaucorps* became more than a fashion statement; it was also a symbol of absolutism and French hierarchy. Louis XIV distinguished his favorite courtiers with the *justaucorps à brevet*, a long blue silk jacket with silver and gold embroidery.[109] Similarly, Chardin describes the Safavid shah bestowing a similar coat upon his own nobles. Chardin describes how the newly crowned Shah Suleiman distributed royal garments as a symbol of his rulership: "Finally, to all the governors and officers who have some principal command in some independent city other than the king, and that according to the custom of Persia, where the newly regnant Sovereign sends to each one of those who possesses jobs of this kind a license he is calling *Ragam* & the habit they call *Kalat*. These two pieces maintain the man who receives them in his employ; and when he appears in public wearing this garment, the people recognize that his authority is preserved."[110] Wearing the garment marked deference to the Safavid ruler.

Rulers in the Islamic world bequeathed robes of honor to their courtiers, visitors, and foreign envoys to bestow a special distinction.[111] Louis XIV likewise privileged certain nobles with the gift of coats that marked their service to the king.[112] The Beg's exotic coat in the engravings thus connects France and Persia culturally and politically, with the shared fashion signaling not just a taste for luxury but the power of both crowns.

The richly decorated fabrics that the Beg wears embellish his room as well. The embroidered fabrics repeat throughout the engravings and present yet another symbol of the Beg's native country that had been adapted by the French. In the engravings, the floral paisley patterns, already appropriated by the French in their clothing, appear on the walls, floors and pillows. In his discussion of Persian manufactories, Chardin acclaims the production of Persian brocades and pronounces that the most expensive type comes from Persia: "They make gold brocades . . . there is no material so expensive in the world. Five or six men at a time are employed in the trade in which this rich stuff is made, and there are as many as twenty-four or thirty different netting-needles to be passed, whereas usually there are only two."[113] He adds, "The gold velvet that is made in Persia is very beautiful above all the one with the curled pile," and praises all Persian fabrics for their quality and longevity.[114] "What is admirable about these beautiful fabrics is that they never see the end, so to speak, that the gold and silver do not diminish as long as the fabric lasts, always keeping its luster & color."[115]

To meet French demand for similar fine fabrics, Colbert had set up French manufactories that produced "gold and silver fabrics, silk, gold cloth in the Persian style, and others in Italian style."[116] In the prints, the floral pattern of the textile appears to be a form of paisley that originated from a pre-sixteenth-century Persian floral pattern. The paisley pattern became popular and spread from India to Europe by 1800.[117] The engraving of the Beg visiting the Gobelins French tapestry factory (see Figure 5.4) directly connects the textile industry of Persia to that of France. Persia, celebrated for its unrivaled carpet manufactures and for its production of fine fabrics, is symbolized in the person of the ambassador but also in the flag that bears the Safavid Empire's emblem: a lion with a rising sun behind it. In the print, Persia honors the French manufactory, bonding the two countries in the production of luxury goods.

## The Beg as *Honnête Homme*

The image of the Beg practicing his native sport (see Figure 5.5) is another type of fashion print that depicts the Beg in a routine activity. He plays what the caption refers to as *zagaie*, a reference to the javelin that the ambassador holds. Chardin lists the different types of equestrian sports that the Persians played as polo, archery, and javelin throwing. Chardin acclaims the Persians for their exercise, which, he explains, is designed "to make the body more supple and vigorous" and allow the practitioner "to learn the handling and usage of arms."[118] Chardin remarks on the skills necessary to perform the games: "The exercise on horseback, which consists of mounting and holding on well, running at full speed without jerking, to stop the horse in its course counting twenty tokens on the ground one after the other, and the same look at the return, without slowing down the race. There are people in Persia who stand so firm and so lightly on horseback, that they put themselves straight on their feet in the saddle, and are thus running the horse at full speed."[119] In the engraving, the ambassador and his comrades gallop on their horses, holding their javelins. The running horses express the rigor of the sport. The Persian players ride skillfully, holding the reins with only one hand, leaving the other free for the javelin.

These images show the ambassador participating in a foreign sport but at the same time demonstrating values of a French *honnête homme*, who disciplines the body along with the mind. Seventeenth-century Frenchmen prized athletic skills, especially those that demonstrated control of the body and ordered movement, including dance, fencing, horsemanship, and exercises in arms. Nicolas Faret, author of *L'Honneste-homme*, emphasizes the need for athleticism: "I still find a good body very necessary, of a good size, more mediocre than too big . . . of limbs well formed, strong, supple, comfortable, easy to adapt to all kinds of exercises of war & pleasure."[120] Faret especially emphasizes that "not to be good on horseback, and not to be able to handle weapons, is not only a notable disadvantage, but also a shameful ignorance."[121] Frenchmen, who are distinguished from the Persians by their French clothing and hats, appear in the background behind the ambassador's javelin match. These Frenchmen, who appear to be exercising with their swords, perhaps fencing themselves, mirror the ambassador's physical activity. In the engraving, the exotic practice of javelin throwing and horsemanship melded well with French values of a physical education for a well-mannered man.

## Comparisons to the King

The horse is another symbol that appears in many engravings, such as the ambassador's parade to the Gobelins factory (see Figure 5.4) and the ambassador's entry through Paris, but more strikingly appears in the engraved equestrian portrait of the ambassador (see Figure 5.8).[122] A side-by-side comparison of the portrait of the Beg with an engraving of Louis XIV on horseback, titled "Portrait de Louis XIV, à cheval, galopant vers la droite" published by Johann Hofman and dated September 1715 (see Figure 5.9), the month of the king's death and the departure of the Beg from France, reveals many similarities.[123] Both Louis XIV and the ambassador appear on horses in a similar rearing position. Both horses are covered with embroidered blankets, symbolic of both Persian


*Figure 5.8* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, is mounted on horseback and wears a luxurious outfit. Equestrian portraits, such as this one of the Beg, glorified the subject's military valor. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*


*Figure 5.9* Louis XIV appears on horseback to commemorate his military victories. European monarchs adapted the equestrian pose from the ancients to glorify their military achievements. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

and French luxury, as France had by now absorbed embellished cloths. Both the king and the ambassador hold batons, symbolic of military leadership. Another comparison of a painting by René-Antoine Houasse entitled "Louis XIV à cheval, roi de France et de Navarre," dated 1679 (see Figure 5.10), and the engraving of the Beg shows that they both appear in bejeweled coats, which are slightly open, and each figure holds the reins in one hand.

*Figure 5.10* Louis XIV in an equestrian portrait to celebrate the siege of a town, which appears in the background. He would face criticism for his long and costly wars that drained the country's resources. *RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY*

Equestrian portraits projected military triumph inspired by images of Roman emperors on horseback, such as the statue of Marcus Aurelius in Rome that is dated around 170 AD now housed in the Capitoline museum in Rome with a copy standing in the center of the Piazza del Campidoglio. Renaissance artists expressed the ambition of dynasties and absolutist states with the imperial equestrian form. Titian's equestrian portrait of Charles V in 1548, for example, emphasized the ambitions and victories of

the emperor.[124] Following in this tradition, Houasse's painting of Louis XIV hails the victory of a siege.

The engraving of the Beg in a similar equestrian pose and background likewise alludes to his military valor.[125] The *Journal Historique* remarked on the Beg's military resume, noting that "in the last revolt in Georgia under the Georgian prince, Khan, he commanded the government troops of Erivan that made up a corps of seven thousand men that the governor had sent. After return from this war, in which he had distinguished himself on several occasions, he became the leader of a group that made a great deal of noise in Persia. Fars Ali Khan, governor of Erivan, was accused of pillage. . . . Mohammad Reza Beg declared himself for the people against him, and took such careful measures, that he was able to depose the governor, as much due to his care and his spirit as the equity of the cause."[126] The engraving's emphasis on the Beg's leadership mirrors Louis XIV's imperial ambitions.

Images of the Beg not only captured his likeness to Frenchmen but even went so far as to fashion him like the king. The prints of the Beg explain how representations of Persia (and the Orient more generally) functioned. The depictions served the interests of the crown and spoke to French audiences by representing him with certain objects, as well as habits, that were key to relating the Persians to Frenchmen. Some of the objects depicted in the engravings indicated Beg's foreign behavior while at the same time representing a connection between France and Persia. Frenchmen, for example, could gaze at the Beg's foreign habits and at the wares depicted in the prints and reflect upon how those same luxuries fit into French culture. Persia's exoticism was not necessarily new to the French by the time the Beg visited. However, exotic elements intrigued Frenchmen, as they reflected French interests, tastes, and cultural concerns and, moreover, served to associate the Beg with contemporary France, affirming him as an ambassador with ties to both countries.

6

# Images of the Persian Visit

## *Connections Between the Safavid and Bourbon Crowns*

The engravings of the Beg depicted a recognizable version of the ambassador that served as a mirror to French culture and civility. In addition to the prints of the Beg, artists recorded the stunning reception at Versailles for contemporaries, eager to know more about the foreigner and his meeting with the king. These prints showcased the connections between France and Persia and recreated moments of the embassy that fit into the image the French crown wished to project.

The images show how the exotic was not only shaped in relation to French tastes but tied to the objectives of the monarchy as well. The illustrations of the Beg's audience drew attention to the Persian's diplomatic gifts, which represented the luxurious goods that symbolized the French and Persian monarchies. The engravings of the visit also included objects that signified royal power in Safavid Persia and Bourbon France, such as the throne and sword, further linking the two crowns. However, the reflection was not without ambivalences. Persian opulence fueled a decades-old debate in France about luxury. Furthermore, representations of Louis XIV as a glorious, world-renowned king suggested an image of Oriental despotism.

## Diplomatic Gifts

In general, Asian goods were well known for their high quality, and Asia itself was identified with luxury in allegorical representations of the continent. For example, in one engraving of the female personification of Asia (see Figure 6.1), jewels, incenses, and exotic plants surround an elaborately dressed woman. The caption describes the Orient as brimming with wealth: "We [Asia] are represented by a woman, richly dressed, which is the true symbol of abundance and of the fertility of these countries, where the people are superbly clothed and, in particular, the women flaunt on their bodies all that magnificence and luxury have that is most precious and charming."[1] Another allegorical representation mentions the jewels, materials, and silver that come from Asia.[2] The luxury of the Persians particularly struck European travelers, and the Beg's visit presented a tangible example of their Persian magnificence. Breteuil, for example, noted the Beg's luxurious habit of changing clothes frequently: "Nobody changed clothes as often as this ambassador."[3] Chardin had described the Persian extravagance of changing clothing


*Figure 6.1* Asia is personified by a beautiful woman sitting in elaborate attire and holding rare scents, incense, and rare balms. A chest of jewels, an elephant, and exotic plants surround her. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

often: "One may dress after the Persian manner very reasonably, both men and women, yet there is not a country where luxury and shew abound more in men as well as the women . . . they change every day. The people of quality seldom wear one [outfit] two days together; and if there fall but the least drop upon it, let it be what it will, it is in their opinion, a spoil'd robe; another must be put on immediately."[4]

The prints illustrated the luxurious lifestyle of the Persian diplomat, but that luxury could also be a target of criticism. Chardin writes, "The luxury of the Persians is the cause of their ruin as much as anything else; for though their cloaths last a long time, yet they cost them abundance of money at first."[5] Chardin labels Persians spendthrifts, especially the elites, who quickly squandered the king's payments.

> These people are the greatest spenders in the world, and who think the least about the day after tomorrow, as I will explain. They can not keep money, and any fortune that happens to come to them, they spend it all in a very short time. Let the King, for example, give fifty or a hundred thousand livres to someone; or whatever good sum comes to him on the other hand, he uses it in less than a fortnight. He buys slaves of one and the other sex; he rents beautiful women; he hires a handsome horse-drawn carriage and servants; he furnishes himself, or dresses sumptuously; and consumes it quickly, without any regard to what will follow, or how long it will last.[6]

Luxury was even blamed for Persian military decline: "Luxury is the main cause of the destruction of the Persian troops; for although the cavaliers are only given about four hundred pounds of pay, they spend the double on clothes alone."[7] The criticism of Persian extravagance resembled French criticism of French luxury and profligacy that appeared prominently in texts such as Fénelon's *Telemachus* of 1699.[8]

The French courtiers' high expectations for Persian luxury also generated a negative image of Persia. The court audience expected the ambassador to present a wealth of expensive and rare goods to Louis XIV, but the gifts he brought seemingly did not match up to the court's anticipation.[9] The engraving by S. Henry chez Chiquet on the rue Saint-Jacques (see Figure 6.2) depicts the presents offered by the ambassador and represents them as being more magnificent than they may have actually have been.[10] The print's illustration and caption seem exaggerated when compared to Breteuil's account of the presents. According to Breteuil, the gifts "consisted of only 106 pearls, 180 turquoise stones, and two pots of the balm of Mumie," which caused outrage among members of the court.[11] Breteuil's memoirs express the disappointment: "The public was scandalized to the point of uttering slanderous remarks about the ambassador."[12] Breteuil notes that this added to the gossip that the ambassador was an imposter, who did not represent the shah of Persia and, in fact, had never even visited the Persian monarch's court.[13] In contrast, the image of the ambassador depicted many fabulous gifts, and it lists the following: "1. Seven precious gems or diamonds weighing 250 grains, 2. A rose of Oriental rubies composed of 40 different pieces, 3. A sword decorated with diamonds, emeralds, and stones of all colors with a sheath bordered with pearls, 4. Two hundred and eighty-five different turquoises, 5. One hundred very beautiful Oriental pearls, 6. Twelve pieces of material with a base of gold, and as many of silver, 7. Several packages of ointment from India, 8. Three packages of the balm Mumie."[14]

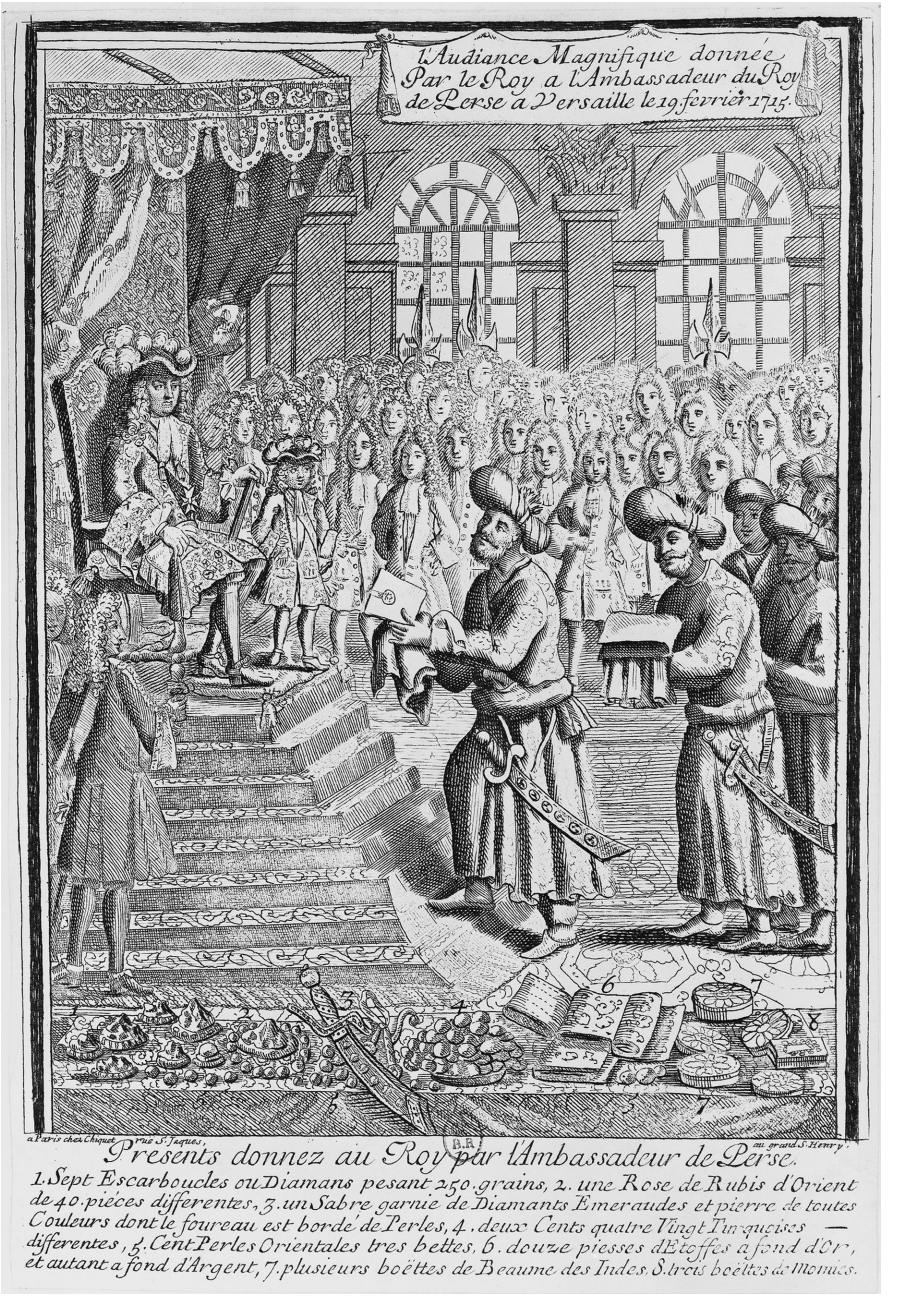


*Figure 6.2* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, hands his diplomatic letters to Louis XIV, the French king. In the foreground, the exotic presents he has brought from Persia rest on a table. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

## The Sword

The engraving of the gifts changes the representation of the objects from Persia to match the expectations of the French audience. Engravings of foreign embassies allowed Louis XIV to control the narrative regarding his position in the world. Here, the print reimagines the gifts, contrasts with Breteuil's description, and dispels any disappointment. The list of gifts is embellished and imbued with symbols of royal power. For instance, the print's addition of the ornamented sword represents the power of the Persian and French monarchies. In the image of the Beg eating (see Figure 5.7), the sword is clearly decorated with stones on its guard and lies delicately on an embroidered pillow that sits by the Beg's side. The sword again rests on a pillow in the image of the ambassador smoking his pipe (see Figure 5.3). In the depiction of the presents, the sword sits upon the table on top of the arrangement of precious stones in the foreground. The sheath is decorated with large stones and the handle appears studded with smaller ones, as the legend indicates. The image shows two additional swords worn by the ambassador and a member of his entourage, who approach the king wearing the richly ornamented weapons at their side.

The sword recalls royal strength in both French and Persian monarchical traditions. In his text *The Coronation of Suleiman*, Chardin mentions the sword as one of the symbols of the monarchy and an object that bestows authority upon the king. He includes a depiction of the sword with the other important objects of the Persian ceremony: the royal stool and crown (see Figure 6.3). He writes, "The third piece [of the coronation ceremony] was a *chemchir* or sword of which the hilt and sheath, as well as the buckles of the belt, were all covered with jewels in proportion to the crown."[15] The sword, in turn, symbolizes the French crown, as it constituted a part of French coronation rite. As explained by historian Jacques Le Goff: "The sword makes him [the French king] the secular arm of the Church and which he entrusts to be borne unsheathed by the seneschal of France."[16]

The sword ties France and Persia in other ways. Chardin, for instance, links the unique shape of the Persian weapon to an activity shared by both elite Persians and Frenchmen: fencing.[17] Chardin recounts that the curved shape of the Persian *chemchir* is designed to wound more dangerously than a straight sword, something experts in arms proved through the rules of fencing. Chardin cites Persians practicing the art of fencing in the Place Royale of Isfahan for the coronation of Shah Suleiman in 1667.[18] The object of the sword links the French and Persian crowns and recognizes a common sporting art. Fencing originated in Italy, but it was seventeenth-century France that developed the method of teaching and set of rules.[19]

The connection made by the sword is even more apparent in the fact that France bestowed embellished swords on visiting ambassadors. For Frenchmen, the gift of the sword symbolized chivalry and military valor, and it suggested athletic skill associated not only with fencing but also with combat and equestrian games, which the Beg himself practiced.[20] The repetition of the sword in the engravings is another marker that compares the Beg to a French gentleman.

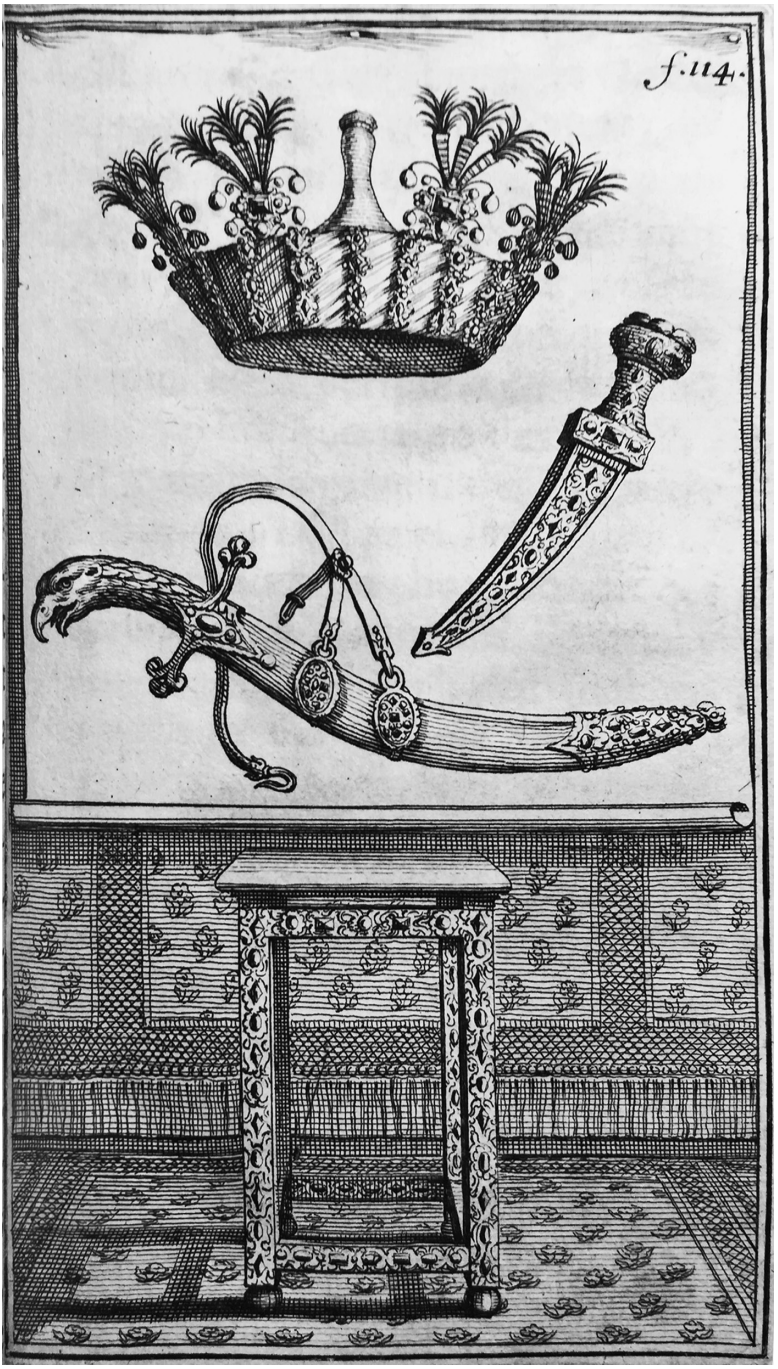


*Figure 6.3* The crown, the sword, the dagger, and the royal stool are the key pieces of the coronation ceremony of the Persian Safavid shahs. These articles were made of gold and luxurious fabrics and covered in a variety of precious stones. *The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles*

## Textiles and Carpets

The gift of the "twelve pieces of material with a base of gold, and as many of silver" associated Persia and France through luxurious clothing. Although the court voiced disappointment with the gifts, adorned cloth was a sought-after diplomatic gift between foreign countries and was highly valued. The example of Shah Abbas I's diplomatic exchange with Spain reveals the value of silks for both Persians and Europeans. In 1618, Shah Abbas had sent fifty bales of Persian silk to be sold in Europe. The shah's representative, Antonio de Gouvea, misrepresented the silk as a gift for Philip III of Spain. The shah believed the silk too costly to be a gift for the king of Spain, who had sent him gifts of much lesser value. To repair relations, Philip sent an embassy to Persia led by Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa. The long list of presents included textiles such as gold satin and velvets and a costume lined with gold material.[21] Textiles often served as mediators in diplomatic exchanges.[22] In the case of the Persian ambassador, the cloth, like the sword, presented an image of luxurious, powerful monarchy, something that both countries wished to project. The textiles mediated the exotic with the familiar and fused what the French and Persians had in common.

Textiles pervade the images of the ambassador. For example, the print showcasing the ambassador's gifts is laden with various materials. The floor under the embassy's feet and the steps leading to Louis XIV's throne seem to be covered in a flower-patterned carpet in a Persian style. In his description of the Beg's audience, Breteuil attests that this carpet was indeed of Persian origin: "His Majesty gave him an audience first after Mass in the throne room, though there is none at present: there is only a single-step platform of a Persian carpet of gold, and on which there is a crimson velvet armchair."[23] The Persian carpet had also been used to greet the Siamese ambassador in 1686 and perhaps other foreign ambassadors. Carpets had a diplomatic use in the Safavid Empire, as Persian shahs had gifted superb silk examples to Europeans.[24] In the imagery of the Beg, the carpet shown recalls the exquisite quality of Persian carpets.

The Venetian ambassador to Tabriz in 1474, Josafa Barbaro, noted the "sylke carpets . . . Which were mervailouse faire" and "the most beautiful."[25] He found them more impressive than carpets from Bursa and Cairo. The Ardabil carpets (1539–40), two of the three existing carpets remaining from the early Safavid period, attest to the fine craftsmanship of early modern Persian carpets. The Persian crown commissioned the pair for the shrine of Shaykh Safi Din Ardabili, a Sufi leader and ancestor of the founder of the Safavid dynasty. The stunningly beautiful carpets were made in Ardabil, in northwest Iran, near the shrine. Their high knot count, rich dyes, and intricate patterns make them particularly noteworthy and point to a high level of artistic skill, as their creation would have taken several years and the work of numerous people.[26]

Under Safavid rule, carpet production reached a peak due to the court's patronage, the availability of materials, and the demand from foreign markets. Jean Chardin comments, "These are the carpets, which we commonly call in Europe carpets of Turkey because they came from there by sea after having been brokered in Persia."[27] Chardin informs his French audience that all carpets may come through the Ottoman Empire, and therefore are almost solely attributed to the Ottomans, but many indeed originate in Persia.

## Jewels and Balms

The Beg honored Louis XIV with turquoise and pearls, jewels that represented luxurious and lucrative commodities in the Safavid Empire. Chardin observes, "Indeed, Persian pearls have a lot more brilliance and a higher color than Western pearls."[28] The Persian Gulf, explains Chardin, produces an abundance of exquisite pearls: "After the mines of precious gems, I place the fishing of pearls, which is done in all the Persian Gulf, but especially around the island of Baherin. This fishery is abundant, producing over a million pearls a year. I have seen a pearl from there, which weighed fifty grains, round in perfection: it was a great rarity, the largest pearls of this sea being usually only ten to twelve grains."[29] Chardin makes clear the royal control over pearl fishing: "The fishermen are obliged, under severe penalties, to give the King the pearls above this weight."[30]

Pearls also carried a symbolic value through Eurasia: "The pearl is known by pompous names throughout the East. The Turks and Tartars call it *margwon*, which means 'globe of light.' Persians call it *mervarid*, that is to say, 'production of light'; & *loulou*, which also means 'bright & brilliant.' This is to express its beautiful eye."[31] In Europe, pearls were rare, exotic, and as fashionable as diamonds. Pearls were naturally perfect, while diamonds needed human intervention to achieve their ideal shape. Diamonds eclipsed pearls in demand only when methods for polishing and cutting them improved at the end of the seventeenth century.[32] Both Frenchmen and Persians would have appreciated the value of the Persian pearls.

The Beg presented turquoises, another jewel prized by the Persians, to Louis XIV. Chardin proclaims, "But the richest Persian mine is that of the turquoise."[33] The most prized turquoise stone came from the mines of Nishapur. The mines had been in operation since the ninth century, but production reached a height under Timurid and Safavid rule, when turquoise was frequently bought and sold in the Eurasian caravan trade. In Eurasia turquoise represented imperial power: for instance, Shah Ismail had presented turquoise stones to Ismail Adil Shah of Goa in 1513 and, a year later, to Alphonse de Albuquerque of Portugal. At other times, the stone was captured in battle and became a symbol of conquest and victory. The color also became prized, appearing in architecture across the Islamic world. In Europe, however, turquoise was void of the traditional significance it held across Eurasia and was only considered a semiprecious stone.[34] The French may have missed the significance of the stone, but the gift did represent the unrivaled turquoise trade and the preeminence of Persian jewels, and the symbolism of the turquoise pieces matched French claims to magnificent goods.

The final gift listed is a set of Mumie balms. Jean Chardin introduces Frenchmen to this precious and ancient salve:

> The other Mumie is a precious gum that distills in rock. There are two mines, or two springs, in Persia. With the experience of the marvelous cures, they are every day with this precious drug. . . . The rocks from which the real Mumie distills, belong to the king; & everything that distills is for him. They are closed by five seals of the principal officers of the province. The mine is opened only once a year, in the presence of these officers, and still others, and all that is

> found of this precious putty, or the greater part, is sent to the treasure of the king from where, with a little bit of credit, we draw from it what is needed. Mumie's word is Persian, coming from *moun*, which means 'wax, gum, ointment.' The Hebrews & the Arabs use this name in the same meaning. The Persians say that the Prophet Daniel taught them the preparation and the use of the Mumie.[35]

Chardin's description suggests the relation between this balm and the Persian monarchy: only the king has access to this rare ointment.[36]

## Symbols of French and Persian Luxury

The exchange of diplomatic gifts between the French and Persians held symbolic meaning for both monarchies. Material objects had long connected Europe and the Islamic world. In the Middle East, the presentation of gifts was a form of communication, as gifts were selected for their special meanings. A case in point is Shah Tahmasp's embassy to the Ottoman court in 1567. Every gift presented by the embassy conveyed a specific message, including manuscripts of the Qur'an and *Shahname*, prized even over the gift of two large pearls and a ruby that was the size of a pear. The Qur'an represented Shiite Islam, practiced by the Safavids and in competition with the Sunni Islam of the Ottomans. The *Shahname*, for its part, recognized the long lineage of Persian kings and suggested their legitimacy over the Ottomans.[37]

The Safavid choice of gifts to Louis XIV was equally symbolic for the Persian crown. The turquoise stones and Mumie balm were objects distributed according to royal command; the textiles were produced through the patronage of the crown. However, the meaning of the objects changed as they switched hands. Saint-Simon, for instance, describes the turquoise pieces as "commonplace," clearly ignorant of the symbolic value that made them so precious in the Islamic world.[38] Saint-Simon more generally misses the significance and honorific value of the gifts in Persian culture, writing, "The presents were beneath contempt," and expressing his disappointment at the low value: "The gifts were as disgraceful to the King of Persia as they were to King Louis, consisting in all four hundred very poor pearls, two hundred most commonplace turquoises, and two gold boxes of mumis—a precious balm that issues from one rock enclosed within another, and that congeals after a certain time."[39]

For the Persians, turquoise, Mumie, pearls, and textiles represented royal production of luxurious goods. Some of these presents were valued similarly by the French and reflected parallels between the two monarchies. However, these objects could be interpreted differently even among the French recipients. While the engravers embellished the gifts to glorify the monarchy, others, such as Saint-Simon, saw the gifts as poor matches to French luxury.

The Bourbon monarchy presented ambassadors with precious jewels and textiles, especially tapestries that illustrated a version of history that glorified the Bourbon monarchy, called the *histoire du roi*. Especially well known was the *boite à portrait* or portrait box: a box featuring the portrait of the king surrounded by diamonds. Another valuable

gift was the *table de bracelet*; offered to ambassadors or their wives, this bracelet was a ribbon of diamonds or pearls featuring a portrait of the king or queen (smaller than the one used in the portrait box) surrounded by diamonds.

The court also offered expensive medals and gold chains to visiting ambassadors, including the Beg's entourage.[40] The Baron de Breteuil describes them as follows: "Four gold chains, which each contained a medal of the king and weighed 500 écus. These were for the principal servants of the ambassador and for the interpreter Padery."[41] Visiting diplomats typically received porcelains from the Sèvres manufactory as well as carpets and tapestries from the Gobelins and Savonnerie factories.[42] The specific gifts presented to the Beg included brocades of gold and silver, silks, a Savonnerie carpet, gems, medals, and clocks—a technology that Asian empires sought from Europe.[43]

At one time Persia had been a considerable source of inspiration through its precious gems, textiles, and other luxurious goods, However, by the close of the seventeenth century, the French had already appropriated and reproduced many of these Persian indulgences, to the point of surpassing the original foreign inspirations. In the eyes of many of the courtiers, such as Saint-Simon, the gifts of the Persians dazzled less brilliantly in comparison to the opulence of Louis XIV's court and the products of the French manufactories. Although the negative assessment of the presents could be interpreted as damaging to the embassy's reputation, the disparaging comments still served the crown's propaganda purposes, as it cast French luxury in a favorable light. Some of the exotic luxuries of Persia were not only familiar but had become French themselves. In other cases, specifically that of turquoise, the symbolic value of the gifts had never crossed over into France and remained still too foreign for appreciation.

The gifts, therefore, to borrow from Carrie Anderson, were "active producers of meaning rather than passive accessories to intended diplomatic agendas."[44] The objects themselves produced their own meaning independent of the diplomatic actors, including the Beg, Breteuil, and Louis XIV, none of whom could control the interpretation of the presents as they passed from Persian hands to French ones and were decoded by different audiences. In the end, the French monarchy's efforts to refit the gifts to suit its glorification could not overcome the varied meanings embedded in the objects themselves. The luxurious and royal items in the prints directed the viewer to the positive connections between France and Persia. Yet the artists could not entirely control any negative interpretations.[45]

## The Audience

The engravings of the ambassador's visit to Versailles portray what the monarchy would have wished: a lavish event in which the king appears as a great world leader who receives a dignitary from a faraway land and a great Oriental empire. The engravings aimed to glorify the French monarchy and Persia through illustrations of the official events of the visit, such as the Beg's entry into Paris, his visit to Versailles, and his tour of the Gobelins, the French tapestry manufactory. The engravings offer a positive portrayal of the visit and refrain from suggesting any mishaps during the event or criticisms of Louis XIV or the ambassador.

The image titled "The Audience Given by the King Louis XIV to the Ambassador of Persia, at Versailles the XIX of February 1715," signed "In Paris chez Langlois master painter on the Petit Pont, at the Coupe d'Or with the *privilège* of the king" (see Figure 6.4), is similar to other audience images, such as those of the Siamese, that were meant to glorify the king.[46] Louis XIV appears sumptuously dressed on a high throne, raised by several steps. Meanwhile, the Beg stands at the bottom of the steps and holds out his letter from the shah. The print seizes upon the moment before the Beg breaks French protocol by handing the letter directly to the king. The image captures the solemnity and richness of the reception, and it appears as if ceremonial procedure has ruled the day without any glitches.

The *Mercure galant* supported the engraving's description of the audience at Versailles. The periodical served the crown's propagandistic goals, since not only did it fall under the control of government censors but many of its writers also belonged to the royal family circle.[47] In fact, because the royal administration provided the descriptions of court events, the *Mercure galant* can be considered an official journal of the monarchy. It was concerned not with offering a critique of court events but only with purveying the image the king wished to project.[48]

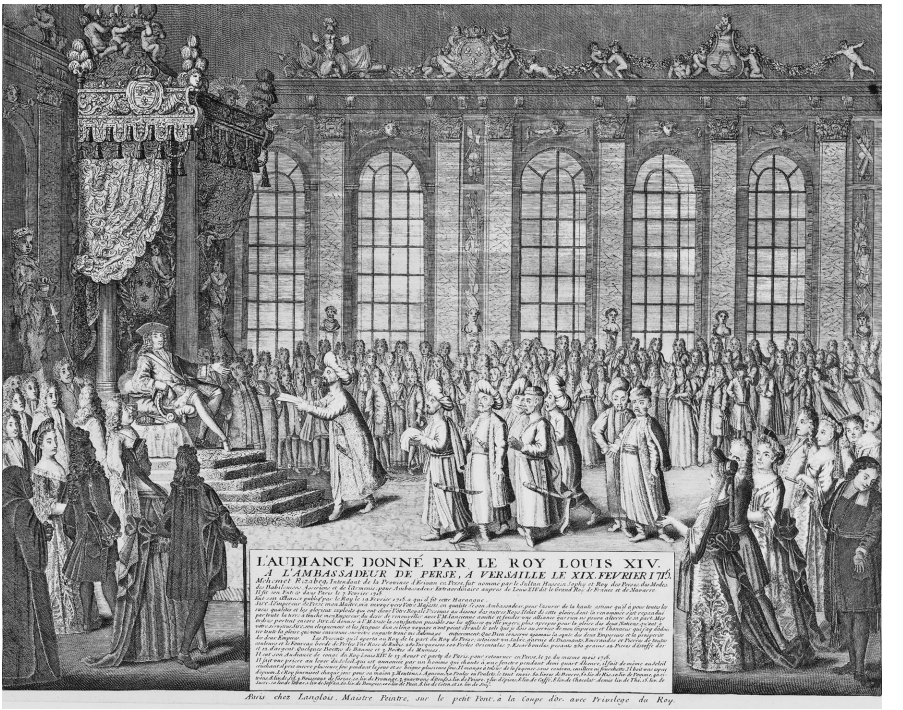


*Figure 6.4* Louis XIV sits on his throne in a diamond suit to receive Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, in a lavish ceremony at the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. All the French courtiers, dressed in their finest embellished outfits, are present to witness the occasion. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

The *Mercure* gave an uncritical portrayal of the Beg's audience and deliberately left out ceremonial errors. While its account did mention that the Beg handed the letter to the king, it does not frame this so as to indicate that the Persian ambassador committed a breach of protocol—something that was obvious to all the courtiers present: "The ambassador, when approaching the king, first placed the letter from the shah of Persia into the hands of His Majesty, who immediately passed it to Monsieur le Marquis de Torcy."[49] The *Mercure* also completely omitted the ambassador's failure to properly address Louis XIV.

By contrast, the Baron de Breteuil provides a detailed description of the Beg's mistake that forced the king himself to act outside of protocol. Breteuil notes disapprovingly that the ambassador remained silent, compelling the king to break the silence and speak first.[50] According to the French perspective, the Beg should instead have opened his dialogue with the king by properly addressing the monarch with a formal speech. Just as the king was never supposed to receive a letter directly from an ambassador, neither was he supposed to address the ambassador first. The *Mercure*, like the engravings, edited out or passed over these ceremonial mistakes.

The monarchy's manipulation of the written and visual illustrations of the visit drew comparisons between France and Persia. Foremost, the crown wished to glorify itself as an empire on par with Persia and other Oriental empires. Breteuil greeted the ambassador by naming Louis XIV as "the emperor of France, my master, the greatest and most pious of the Christian emperors," and welcomed the Beg to Paris, "the capital of his [Louis XIV's] empire, the wealthiest and most superb city in this part of the world."[51]

Louis XIV used the visits by Oriental monarchies to promote himself as a global monarch and emperor. The French crown celebrated Louis XIV as a powerful world leader during the earlier visits of the Siamese and Moroccan embassies. However, the climate had hardened toward Louis XIV's ambitions since these earlier visits. Many French subjects and other European audiences scoffed at his grandiose claims. In 1715, France was still recovering from the War of the Spanish Succession, which had pitted France against the other powers of Europe from 1701 to 1714. Bad harvests plagued the country in 1713 and 1714. Religious tensions also beset the nation, as Louis XIV continued his religious persecution of Protestants and Jansenists. Further, by 1715, the king, at the age of seventy-seven, was elderly by seventeenth-century standards, and his subjects knew that his death was imminent.[52] The court was less focused on the king and already preparing for the change in government that would soon occur.

Between the Siamese visit in the 1680s and the Persian ambassador's visit of 1715, Louis XIV suffered from a diminishing number of glorious conquests and a growing number of criticisms, especially after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The monarchy's decision to strip the Huguenots of their rights led to charges of tyranny. *Les Soupirs de la France esclave* (The sighs of the French slave), printed in France in 1689, and an English pamphlet, *The French Tyrant* (1702), accused Louis XIV of tyrannical rule.[53] In 1691, a medal appeared mocking Louis's Christianity by depicting him forming an alliance with the Ottoman emperor, Sultan Suleiman III. A pamphlet entitled *The Most Christian Turk* (1690) and another called *The Koran of Louis XIV* (1695) viciously drew attention to his Ottoman diplomatic ties.[54]

In 1686, the year of the Siamese visit, France could boast military preeminence in Europe, having beaten a coalition of European powers in the Dutch War, which raged

from 1672 to 1678.[55] The French crown portrayed the Siamese embassy as a celebration of its triumphs in Europe and over the world. By the time of Mohammad Reza Beg's visit in 1715, France could not make such grandiose claims. The War of the Spanish Succession had passed Spain's crown to Louis XIV's grandson, Philip V, but it had not united the two thrones under one dynasty, as the king had anticipated. The war left French finances drained and its military resources sapped. Moreover, the hostilities had weakened France commercially abroad; the Compagnie des Indes closed for several years until its revival in 1717. However, by then France staggered behind its trade rivals in Asia, the Dutch and the English.[56] Although a treaty between Siam and France never materialized, the visit of the Siamese ambassadors offered at least the possibility (however unlikely) of trade, in addition to spectacularizing Louis XIV's reign.[57]

By 1715, it was clear that French commercial ambitions abroad took a backseat to continental military glory; any attempts at international trade agreements were mere theatrics. In fact, observers for the most part ignored any benefits that the Persian visit could bring in terms of improving French commercial or even missionary rights abroad. Instead, courtiers such as Saint-Simon dismissed the visit as a farce. Focused on ridiculing the visit's attempt to aggrandize Louis XIV, they failed to consider any potential ostensible diplomatic ties between France and Persia that the visit could produce. [58]

The Persian embassy, therefore, served to rekindle the glory of an exhausted France, but within bounds dictated by growing disillusionment with Louis XIV's reign. As result of these criticisms, the representation of the Persian visit was more problematic than it would have been earlier in Louis XIV's reign. Any associations between France and the Persian Empire could boost the French crown's reputation as absolutist but also could encourage criticisms of Louis XIV as a tyrannical, Asian-style emperor.

Twenty-nine years before the Persian visit, during the visit of the Siamese in 1686, critics could not have had such an impact. A year before the Siamese embassy, in 1685, the French king had humiliated Genoa with a bombardment and forced the Doge to humble himself at Versailles. In the prints of the Siamese ambassadors, Louis XIV appears distant and imposing in relation to his foreign guests. In essence, the Sun King performed the role of an Asian emperor: the ambassadors bowed to Louis XIV just as they did toward their own monarch, Phra Narai. Siamese subjects treated their king as a god. His presence in public was rare, and when he did appear in front of an audience, he was spatially distanced from others on a high throne. Louis XIV openly imitated an Asian monarch by accepting the same obeisances the Siamese ambassadors offered their own king. Trumpets and drums, customary at Siamese royal audiences, accompanied the entry of the three diplomats into the Hall of Mirrors.[59] Louis XIV also wore his diamond suit to impress upon the Oriental ambassadors that he was equal to their own monarch. Yet while Louis XIV played the role of an Asian emperor in regard to the Siamese, the French courtiers and ministers who surrounded the French king stood close to him and did not bow or prostrate themselves, showing that the king's own subjects did not treat him as a god or emperor. His heirs crowded around the royal throne, in contradistinction to the Siamese practice of distancing themselves from their king. Louis XIV presented himself as an absolute monarch vis-à-vis his Siamese visitors but not over his court.

In 1715, Louis XIV again performed the role of an Asian monarch. For example, the Langlois print of the Beg's audience at Versailles (see Figure 6.4) and the engraving

of the Beg's presents (see Figure 6.2) depict the French king on a throne, similar to how he was represented in the prints of the audience for the Siamese envoys. For the Siamese visit, Louis XIV's throne had reproduced the height and spatial distance associated with the Siamese emperor. For the Persian visit nearly three decades later, the throne signified a particular connection between the Persian and French monarchies. French readers had been informed by travel literature, especially Chardin's writings, of the particular significance of the royal chair (which was used by many Asian emperors) to the Safavid monarchy. Chardin introduces the throne, which was actually a type of stool, as the first piece of the Persian coronation ceremony and describes it in detail as a richly decorated and guarded object symbolic of the Safavid Empire. He depicts the seat in the print of the coronation articles, alongside the sword and the crown (see Figure 6.3): "This stool, at other times when it does not serve the ceremony, is kept with great care in the Royal Treasury, which is in the dungeon of the fortress of Isfahan."[60] Here again, the engravings draw on symbols of authority, specifically Persian coronation symbols, to connect the French and Persian monarchies and showcase royal power. For the Persian visit, the throne takes on a new meaning by drawing on an esteemed coronation symbol shared by both the Persians and the French. The artistic representation of Louis XIV on his throne symbolizes French power but nevertheless conjures the image of a Safavid monarch on his royal seat.

The engravings also showcase the king in his diamond suit, another important material object suggestive of the similarity between the Bourbon and Safavid monarchies. Chardin makes clear the richness of Safavid royal attire; Louis XIV's suit mirrors the gilded and diamond-encrusted accessories that Shah Suleiman wore for his coronation ceremonies. Chardin writes, "His majesty [Shah Suleiman] had on a *Cabaye*, or *Georgian* Vest of Sattin and Silver, thick powdered with Violets; the forepart of which upon his Breast was adorned with long Rows of Pearls and Diamonds, six of each side. Over his Vest he wore a short *Justacore* without Sleeves, of Cloath of Gold, faced with Sables. Upon his right side stuck a Dagger, of which the Sheath and Hilt were set with Emeralds and other Precious Stones: nor was his Sword less gorgeously embellished. Upon his Head he wore a *Persian* Cap or *Dhul-bandt*, made of very fine Silk and Gold, with a Royal *Heron*-Tuft fastened before in a Rose of Diamonds and Rubies."[61]

Yet although Louis XIV modeled himself after Asian monarchs for the Siamese and other visits, the engravings of the visit of the Beg's visit present a more subdued image of Asian imitation in tune with the current political climate. The 1687 print "Royal Audiences with Foreign Ministers at Versailles," by Gérard Jollain, depicts French military victories and religious accomplishments, such as the 1684 treaty between France and Algeria that freed French Christians and the 1684 Treaty of Ratisbon between France and Spain. Louis XIV wears Roman armor alluding to his military preeminence. The prints celebrate the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes that allowed for the persecution of the Huguenots. With their bow before Louis, the Siamese ambassadors celebrate these particular accomplishments.[62]

While the prints of the Siamese visit evoke a dominant France, the images of the Persian ambassador portray a slightly humbler image that recognizes French failures. For example, the Langlois print of the Beg's audience at Versailles (see Figure 6.4) presents an image of Louis XIV that is more in tune with the critical climate toward the king in 1715. The image is more conservative in its stylization of Louis XIV as

an Oriental emperor by making the Persians seem less exotic and prostrate than the Siamese. The differences between the portrayals of the Siamese visit and the Persian visit point to an evolution in French propaganda in response to France's global position. Generally, Louis XIV does not appear as elevated above the Persians as he did in the prints of the Siamese. Even more importantly, the Persian ambassador and his entourage are depicted standing upright, or at most with a slight bow, and in this they do not differ much from the French courtiers. By not appearing as a prostrate subject of an Asian emperor, the Beg distances Persia from the image of despotism. Further, the 1715 engravings temper the projection of Louis XIV as an Asian-style monarch who receives groveling visitors.

On one hand, the prints celebrated the honor bestowed on Louis XIV by the representative of an Oriental and exotic foreign emperor, but on the other, they also had to shake any connotation of Louis XIV as an Oriental monarch. A comparison of the prints of the Siamese and the Persians is instructive. The Siamese appear extremely exotic and strikingly conspicuous amid the Frenchmen around them, standing out with their pointed hats and bare feet. By contrast, the Persians do not appear as outlandish. Even though the clothing of the visitors from Persia is noticeably Oriental in style, their attire blends with the European setting. The Persian robes and hats are more subdued than those of the Siamese.

In both prints, the Siamese also appear in unusual positions. They not only seem more deferential to Louis XIV in their hunched-over deportment but also almost seem as if they are providing some sort of entertainment for the king. In one image (see Figure 6.5), the ambassadors appear in varying positions with bent knees, and one could imagine these extreme positions to be part of a show. One ambassador seems to be deeply bowing to the king while the others gather the presents, like servants. Further, the king seems extraordinarily high above the Siamese on his throne. Louis XIV looks out above and beyond his foreign guests toward the viewer of the print. This adds to the sense of the king's power and authority over the Siamese and to their reverential appearance. In another engraving of the Siamese, the ambassadors are lined up in a geometric pattern that seems highly choreographed and entertaining. By contrast, the Persian ambassador's entourage appears more relaxed than the Siamese, and they have their heads held high, in comparison to the profoundly bent heads of the Siamese.

Antoine Watteau's drawings of the Persian ambassador also distance the Persian ambassador from any luxurious Asian setting and point to a subtler form of exoticism than that exhibited by the Siamese images. For example, in Watteau's drawing titled "Seated Persian" (see Figure 6.6), the focus of the print is on the Persian himself, who does not appear in a bizarre stance or luxurious setting.[63] Indeed, several scholars, such as Alan Wintermute, have indicated that Watteau's Persians signaled a shift in his work toward realism.[64] His Persian figures are recognizable as foreign through their costumes but appear less bizarre and more relatable to Frenchmen. In yet another depiction of the ambassador attributed to Watteau, the ambassador appears on horseback in clothing and accessories that are not especially luxurious.[65] Antoine Coypel, Louis XIV's court painter, produced a miniature portrait of the ambassador that goes even further by focusing only on the head of the Persian, who appears without any exotic paraphernalia except for a fur cap.[66] In both Watteau's and Coypel's depictions, the focus is on the


*Figure 6.5* The Siamese ambassadeurs bow to Louis XIV in the Palace of Versailles in 1686. Louis XIV had a throne made out of silver, which he later had melted down to pay for his wars. *RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY*


*Figure 6.6* A sketch of a Persian man seated. The man in question could be the Persian ambassador of 1715 but does not resemble any other portraits of him. The Persian subject appears in his native attire in a relaxed pose. *RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY*

Persians' facial expressions—they appear familiar and less like unrecognizable exotic "others."

The change to a more restrained expression of exoticism by the end of Louis XIV's reign marks a change in the representation of Orientals as well as a change in the image of the king. The prints of the Persian ambassador aimed to accentuate the king and place less focus on the Persian. The viewers of the print were not supposed to be distracted by the exoticness of the Beg but instead were led to focus on the august presence of his majesty.

The *Mercure galant* provides further proof and explanation. The *Mercure* devoted two volumes to the visit of the Siamese, of which twenty-six pages alone described the audience at Versailles. The journal depicted the exotic behavior and habits of the ambassadors in great detail. In contrast, for the visit of the Persian ambassador, the *Mercure* dedicated only three pages to the reception despite its comparable splendor. Further, the description did not include the exotic details of the ambassador's actions that were so present in the article on the Siamese.[67] Stéphane Castelluccio, in his analysis of the *Mercure galant*, argues that the writers describing the Persian audience "underlined the natural qualities of the Sovereign that struck the ambassador" over the material display. The *Mercure* celebrated the king's persona: "The grandeur of the King, his wisdom and his majesty were naturally so well painted on [the king's] august face that I find it unnecessary to tell you that the Persian ambassador was by far more struck by this than the brilliance of the gems that covered His Majesty's suit and the clothing of the princes."[68] By 1715, the end of Louis XIV's reign, the crown's rhetoric had shifted from focusing on the material elements of splendor and exoticism to stressing the king's natural majesty.

The lack of emphasis on the exoticism of the Persian ambassador in comparison to the Siamese diplomats can also be explained as a response to the criticism directed toward Louis XIV during the latter half of his reign. The French crown wished to advertise the visit by an Oriental visitor but, at the same time, parallel that visitor's customs and politics to those of France. The exotic was a useful tool to generate curiosity and compare Louis XIV's power to that of Oriental emperors, but only as long as it did not point in the wrong direction: Oriental tyranny. Images of Turkish slaves, once included in royal propaganda, no longer served the interests of the crown, as critics took them to suggest Louis XIV as an oppressor who sought to learn from the Turks how to enslave his own people.[69] The 1715 prints suggest a different approach to the crown's propaganda that strived to refute any criticism of Louis XIV as an Asian-style ruler and suggest that he did not deal with despots, either. Persia served this endeavor perfectly: the French did not perceive the Persians as they did the rest of the Oriental peoples. Persia mirrored French civility and luxury and served as the Oriental counterpart to Louis XIV's government.

## The Regency's "Persia"

In August 1715, soon after the Beg's spectacular audience in February, Louis XIV died. By the end of his reign, the gap between the image projected in grand events like the Beg's visit and France's waning position in European affairs had become increasingly apparent.[70] The Duc de Saint-Simon captures the critiques of the aging king in his

memoirs, which cover the last years of Louis XIV's reign. He depicts the elderly monarch in a negative manner and reminds his readers that the Sun King's golden days are long over. Saint-Simon describes the king at the audience as "bent under the weight of [the diamonds that studded his coat], looking worn-out, thin, and vastly ill-favored as he seated himself on the throne."[71] Like a number of others, Saint-Simon also maintains that the Beg is an imposter conjured by Louis XIV's minister, Pontchartrain:

> In the meantime, a Persian ambassador had arrived at Charenton, with all expenses paid from the moment when he disembarked. The King made a great occasion of his coming and Pontchartrain paid court to him assiduously. Pontchartrain was, in fact, suspected of having invented this ambassador, for there seemed to be nothing genuine about him, and his behaviour was as disgraceful as his wretched suite and miserable presents. Moreover he produced neither credentials nor instructions from the King of Persia or his ministers. He seems to have been no more than some kind of provincial intendant, entrusted by the governor of his province with business to transact in France. Pontchartrain blew him up to ambassador status, but, in the event, only the King was deceived.[72]

Saint-Simon admits that the spectacle at Versailles is grand. He explains that the "long gallery and the state apartments were most beautifully decorated, and a magnificent throne was placed at the end of the gallery."[73] Yet he continues to criticize the ambassador, belittling the honor that the visit bestowed on the king and therefore the king himself. Saint-Simon disapproves of the ambassador's entourage, which "appeared in every way poverty-stricken, and the supposed ambassador highly embarrassed and very ill-clad."[74]

In the wake of Louis XIV's death, the crown's propaganda team distanced Louis XV and the regency from the Sun King's tarnished image. Artists immediately reinterpreted the Beg's visit to suit the regent, Philippe d'Orléans. The painting "Louis XIV Receives the Ambassador Mehemet Reza-Bey" (see Figure 6.7) shows how the regency projected the visit to serve the new government.[75] According to Saint-Simon, Antoine Coypel attended the event, which led the painting to be attributed to him.[76] However, Nicole Garnier argues that it is misattributed to Coypel, and in fact the Château de Versailles has reattributed it to Nicolas de Largillière.[77]

At first sight, the painting presents a scene of grandeur similar to the engravings of the ambassador at Versailles. The canvas depicts Louis XIV, seated on his throne in the Hall of Mirrors and surrounded by courtiers, receiving the Persian ambassador, who bows before him. Perrin Stein has used the painting as an example of prostration of foreign visitors.[78] However, the ambassador appears in a bow, which should be distinguished from the less dignified position of prostration that Stein references. Further, the ambassador and the king appear connected and highlighted through their similarly embroidered coats of the same color, which almost equalizes them. The king is elevated by several steps, but the height difference does not appear as significant as it did in images of the Siamese.

Upon closer inspection, the painted scene diverges from the engravings of the same event. First, in the painting, Louis XIV's great-grandson and heir to the throne stands

*Figure 6.7* Louis XIV, the French king, receives Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, in the spectacular Hall of Mirrors of Versailles. The king had paintings, prints, medals, and other forms of media designed to advertise his diplomatic events. *RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY*

beside the king, as in the other images, but the future regent has changed positions. The regent rests on the arm of Louis XIV's chair and appears larger than the king. He stands out in his black outfit, which contrasts with the dominant red color of the painting, since the clothing of the king, the chair, the ambassador and the curtains are all red. The only other figure in black is the boy standing beside the future Louis XV, who is most likely the regent's son, Louis d'Orléans, connected to his father through the black clothing. The regent appears so prominently in the painting that he even seems to be pushing Louis XIV off the throne.

The irregularities of the painting become clearer when we remember that the painting must have been completed after the death of Louis XIV, who died only six months after the Beg's visit. The artist needed to re-present the event so that it glorified not the dead king but the new heir and his regent. Philippe d'Orléans's uncomfortable pose at the edge of Louis XIV's chair could signify that the regent was added into the painting later to show that the Persian ambassador was honoring the regency as well as Louis XIV.

The propaganda of the regency could explain another oddity in the painting: the figure of the Armenian merchant, Hagopdjan de Deritchan, standing next to the ambassador. The Armenian is recognizable by his fur hat, which he, unlike his Muslim counterparts, removes. The Christian Armenian appears as a very large figure in the foreground and eclipses the Persian ambassador himself. Perhaps this served to minimize the court's connection to Muslim foreigners, especially Persia, and stress the relations with Christian Armenians. Although France would revive its relationship with the Ottoman Empire in the near future, the early regency most likely hoped to distance itself from the criticism that characterized Louis XIV as a despot. The regency also would

depart from associations with Persia as the government received news about the declining state of the Safavid Empire. The fact that the proposed medals of Mohammad Reza Beg to commemorate his visit were never struck further testifies to a deliberate departure from Persian associations.

Despite these unsettled questions surrounding the painting, it is almost certain that this canvas was completed after Louis XIV's death. Even though Louis XIV may have commissioned the painting, the final representation of the Persian ambassador's visit is not what the king would have imagined. Louis XIV is eclipsed by his successors, Louis XV and the regent. The painting shows how the Orient could be reinvented to fit the changing needs of the monarchy.

## Louis XIV and the Oriental Tyrant

Through Persia, the Bourbon crown celebrated the Orient's acknowledgement of Louis XIV's greatness while distancing it from Oriental tyranny. The crown used the Beg to glorify the Sun King's reign, using symbols of material culture to associate Persia and France while refuting any criticism of despotic rule or an association with despotic countries. Though Siam was represented as despotic in 1686, Persia was not to be associated with Asian despotism in 1715. Louis XIV's attempts to manage his own image resulted in a shift in the representation of Persia and the Orient. However, despite the monarchy's manipulation of the visual and written illustrations of the visit, the royal writers and artists could not completely eliminate the negative associations between France and an Oriental empire such as Persia.

Although Persia was distant and had relatively little interaction with France compared to its neighbor the Ottoman Empire, the qualities of Persia that reflected controversial aspects of France, such as luxury and absolutism, were well known through travel texts. The Persian mirror, therefore, reflected an ambivalent image. In the end, the Beg's exotic habits and luxurious lifestyle reflected French concerns about their own luxury and decadence.

The exotic ambassador's image was created by artists and the French court who, in the end, could not control his reception. The story of the Beg's prints shows how the exotic was reformulated to meet different audiences at the moment of his visit in 1715. Yet interpretation of the exotic was impossible to control and dependent on the current judgment of various spectators that included the king himself. The exotic in seventeenth-century France, far from being definable and static, was constantly renegotiated and in flux. Critics of the monarchy again refigured the Beg as a polite hero caught in the clutches of a despotic Persia that signified the defects of Louis XIV's France.

7

# The Absolutist Mirror

French notions of Persia shifted in response to changing French tastes and political needs, and this pattern continued after the Beg's visit. French writers had long considered Persia the Oriental counterpart to France in civility, refined manners, and luxury. Travelers such as Jean Chardin produced images of a "polite" Persia but also suggested an endangered and decaying Persia, where injustice, intolerance, and violence existed. New accounts of decline cast a larger shadow over the connection between France and Persia. An Oriental fairy tale, *Amanzolide*, that was published in 1716 described the conflict between civility and political barbarism through courteous heroes, who confronted danger and injustice in Persia. Mohammad Reza Beg served as one of these fictional gentleman in *Amanzolide*. Moreover, news of the collapse of the Safavid Empire stunned French readers, and the image of degeneration eclipsed Persian *politesse*. Scholars of the eighteenth century have ignored the effect of Persia's demise on France's view of despotism and the East. The monarchy's use of Persia to reflect French glory had been discredited by the collapse of the empire. The destruction of the Safavid state served as a startling warning to France, a cautionary example of the hazards of despotism.[1]

## An Endangered Persia

The image of a civilized Persia masked danger and corruption. Chardin described Persia as one of the beacons of civilization but noted its demise under Shahs who fell to debauchery and drunkenness by the second half of the seventeenth century.[2] Persians were caught in a deteriorating political state. The fictional *Amanzolide* develops the tension between civility and decadence in the Persian world.[3]

The hero of the story, which was written by Louis-Jacques d'Hôtelfort, is a fictional Mohammad Reza Beg. *Amanzolide* exemplifies how the fairy tale genre used Oriental diplomatic encounters as springboards to express social and political concerns. The Beg's visit to Paris provided an Oriental context to discuss issues of despotism, slavery, and the harem. Scholars have pointed out that eighteenth-century writers used Asian settings to critique French political institutions but have neglected to discuss the role that diplomatic encounters with Persia played in this critique.

French readers and Enlightenment authors were well aware of the debauchery of the harem and the influence women could have on politics in Persia through travel literature. Jean Chardin, for example, launched the first page of his *Coronation of Soleiman* in 1671

with a print of the coronation scene that emphasized the role of the harem and raised its associations with slavery. (See Figure 7.1.) The book opens with an illustration of the shah in his coronation robes.[4] The first person Chardin describes is a eunuch: "Upon the right side of his majesty, at a little distance behind him stood the Aga-Nazir Eunuch, who at that Ceremony performed the Office of the High Chamberlain."[5] The royal chamberlain, also called the *mihtar*, was the chief of the white eunuchs and personal attendant to the king. This post granted him great influence over the shah, as he helped the monarch dress, tasted his food, managed his jewelry, and maintained his large wine vessel used for parties. In other words, his constant proximity to the shah awarded him immeasurable input.[6] The eunuch denoted the feminization of males, the mixing of the sexes, and the disappearance of sexual difference in the harem, which most concerned the Enlightenment writer the Baron de Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat.[7]

Chardin next raises the issue of slavery, another topic that would interest Montesquieu, through his description of another group in the image: "A little behind him appeared six Georgian children from fifteen to sixteen years of age, who had been made Eunuchs, extremely beautiful, as are most of the young children of that country. They were so placed as to make a half circle about the king, standing upright without so much as stirring their hands which they held across upon their breast."[8] Slavery of boys and girls, particularly for service in the monarch's harem, had been an object of criticism by Europeans. At another point in Chardin's *Coronation*, he points to the king's enslavement of local Armenian young children. He describes the shah's "usual walks being upon Giulfa-side [New Julfa], a Town belonging to the Armenians, out of which he pick'd all the handsome Virgins to fill his palace. It is said, the first time that he caus'd the young virgins under twelve and above ten years of Age to be thus cull'd out."[9]

After Chardin describes the eunuch chamberlain and the Georgian boys, he describes "a great number of old black eunuchs, every one holding a long musquet in his hand, of which the stock was garnished with gold and precious stones."[10] Following them, he lists a number of other posts, including the most distinguished: "Upon the left hand of the king, which is esteemed the most honorable among the Persians, sat first the commissioner that represented Dlahammed-Mehdi, the Prime Minister, next to him the second commissioner that represented Gemchid-Kaan General of a Body of the Army." Chardin emphasizes the importance of the harem to Persian monarchy by listing the head eunuchs and young slave boys before describing the other officers that encircled the king. In his *Travels*, Chardin repeats the dangers of harem politics, which he claims "gives the most trouble to the ministers of Persia."[11] He discusses the control exercised by the queen mother, the highest-ranking eunuchs, and the most favored mistresses of the harem, who held the attention of the king for hours per day and thereby posed a challenge to the advice of his ministers.[12]

Louis XIV's propaganda had related the crown to a polite, civilized and luxurious Persian monarchy while masking the discussion of despotism inherent in the comparison. During the king's final years and thereafter, associations between Louis XIV and tyranny increased.[13] The Beg, who became a celebrity during his stay in France through royal events and prints that connected him to Louis XIV and French identity, provided a recognizable name to examine French politics in the fictional story of *Amanzolide*. The story reinvents the Beg as a Persian gentleman, challenged by the despotism and slavery of the harem. In the tale, a polite Persia no longer hides the injustice of the harem.

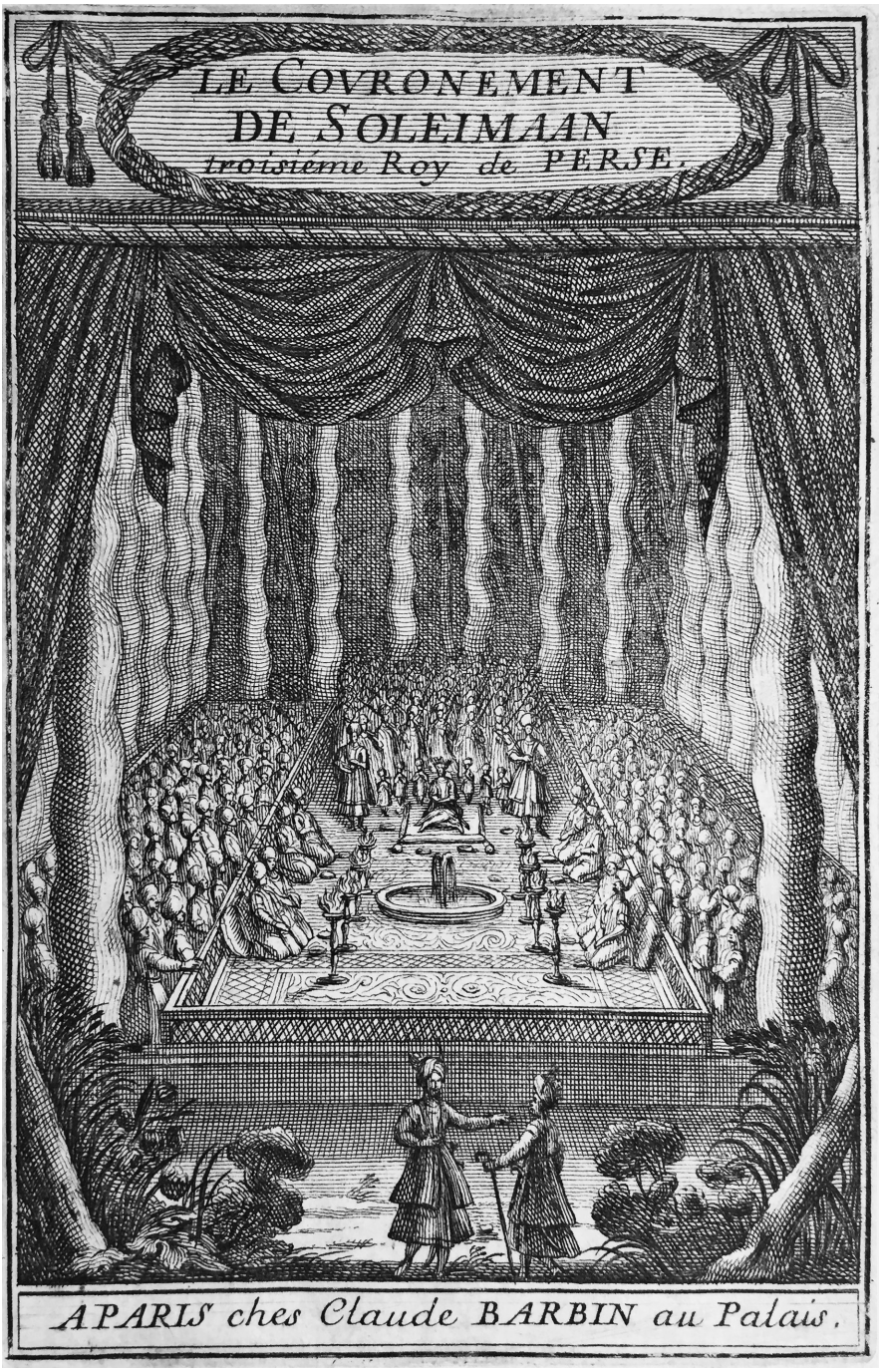


*Figure 7.1* Shah Suleiman sits in the center of his court for his coronation ceremony. It is a lavish room filled with the king's officials. *The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles*

Rather, the Beg's virtue serves to highlight and contest the offenses of despotism. The Beg's character illuminates the tension between the image of Persia as a refined country and the picture of its despotic political system, as he must confront both aspects of the Safavid state.

*Amanzolide* takes place in a courtly world like the one evoked in Pétis de la Croix's *Mille et un jours*. *Amanzolide* introduces the Persian ambassador as an ideal protagonist. He possesses prized traits: he is courageous, generous, and even prudent in his business affairs.[14] The fictional Beg fits the writer's descriptions of Persian *politesse*. Antoine Galland remarked in his preface to Monsieur d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* that "we grant certain charms to the Arabs . . . we attribute politeness to the Persians."[15] In *Amanzolide*, the Beg's character has all the best qualities except "the ability to love."[16]

The Beg falls in love in the midst of a violent encounter. A merchant, begging for aid, approaches the Beg in his home province of Erivan. The man's caravan was held up and he needs assistance to save his men and merchandise. The merchant, Zemed, attracted by the Beg's good qualities, requests his help: "Mohammad [Reza Beg] who naturally is generous did not refuse to help a man who appeared worthy of it."[17] The fictional Beg quickly disperses the merchant's attackers.[18] Although the Persian ambassador instantly subdues the disorder, the story reveals the chaos in Persia, where, with no police or government authority present for protection or justice, merchants were susceptible to attack by thieves. Seventeenth-century French travelers such as André Daulier Deslandes had applauded the safety of Persia's caravan routes.[19] However, by the eighteenth century, travelers condemned the danger of the thoroughfares and the corruption of the road guards, who often themselves robbed the caravans.[20]

The idea of Persian decay becomes clear when the Beg falls in love. After he rescues the merchant's caravan, the Beg notices that the merchant paid special attention to the caravan's most valuable commodity: a beautiful woman. The thieves had attacked the merchant's caravan in order to kidnap her. Immediately the Beg falls in love with the lady: "Mohammad Reza Beg gazed at her with admiration, even though he was accustomed to seeing women as beautiful in Persia."[21] However, her beauty is not her sole or most attractive quality. The young woman, called Amanzolide, exudes noble qualities. She has "a great soul and *esprit* of an extraordinary elevation; these are the only things that come close to her beauty."[22] She, like the Beg, represents Persian civility in the midst of an uncivilized world.

The Beg discovers that Amanzolide was born in the Christian province of Georgia to noble parents reduced to poverty. French travel literature had already described Persia's brutal treatment of Armenian and Georgian Christians. La Forest de Bourgon, a missionary, recounted in his *Relation de Perse* (1710) the attacks on these Christian communities. The Persians took Georgians from Tbilisi and enslaved them. Children as young as two years old were taken while the women were put to the service of the harem.[23] In the story, Amanzolide was, like the real Georgians, taken from her home and enslaved. Her own brother had sold her to the merchant Zemed, who was bringing her to the shah. They were on their way to Isfahan when they were attacked and rescued by the Beg. The Beg learns that he has fallen in love with a woman destined for the shah.[24] Despite this tremendous hurdle, he determines to court Amanzolide.[25]

Amanzolide and the Beg fight the Persian tradition of sending Christian women to the harem. Both characters despise the despotic institutions that exist in Persia.

Amanzolide "has an unshakable loathing for the seraglio to which they were driving her."[26] She "imagines with horror the slavery and continual coercion to which her beauty subjected her" in the harem.[27] She confesses her fears to the Beg, who becomes the hero of the story, for only he could free Amanzolide, a Georgian Christian, from slavery in the shah's harem.

Amanzolide's fear and hatred of the harem resonates with the Western condemnation of the institution, especially its secrecy.[28] While the romances of the French king were public knowledge, the love affairs of the rulers of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires were hidden.[29] The seventeenth-century merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier complained, "Foreigners, especially Christians, cannot penetrate [the palace's] secrets without great expense and danger."[30] Many parts of the palace were accessible, although at a great risk, but according to Tavernier, the harem was impossible to breach.[31]

The seraglio, the term for the entire palace of the Ottoman sultan along with the harem, marked Asian despotism in European thought. Within the walls of the seraglio existed all the vices of Asian monarchies. The harem, a distinctive feature of the Persian and Ottoman courts, piqued the curiosity of Europeans because no one could enter it and therefore little information existed on the subject. Europeans could only imagine life in the harem and devoted many texts to dreaming about what went on within its walls.[32] Amanzolide's hatred of the enclosed feminine space is in tune with early Enlightenment texts, such as Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721) and *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), which argued for its negative influence. The harem was the root of religious and political despotism and created the worst types of citizens. First, the harem encouraged immorality, as the shah's women demonstrated. Female virtue, defined as modesty and chastity, did not exist in the palace enclosure, where women were promiscuous and sexual to attract attention and curry favor. The harem encouraged servility and submission and also created bad male citizens: eunuchs.[33]

*Amanzolide*'s protests against slavery and the harem could be interpreted as a critique of absolutism and call for freedom of those oppressed, such as women.[34] In Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, the Persian visitors, accustomed to the enclosure of women in the harem, express their surprise at the prominence of women in French public life. Scholars have argued that Montesquieu believed women's freedom essential to liberty.[35] However, others contend that Montesquieu embraced a middle course in which women should be "managed."[36] Nevertheless, Montesquieu did not embrace the system of gender relations in the Orient and found slavery, as voiced by Amanzolide, intolerable.[37] European discussions of the Orient and its harem actually disguised uneasiness with the question of slavery in the colonies.[38]

*Amanzolide* highlights the tension between Persian *civilité* and arbitrary power, and perhaps could raise questions concerning slavery abroad as well as the state of women within France. Mohammad Reza Beg and Amanzolide evoke the virtues of French courtesy, politesse, and *esprit* increasingly smothered up by a decadent Versailles that oppressed its subjects at home and abroad in the colonies. Above all, Mohammad Reza Beg and Amanzolide reject the harem, the symbol of autocracy, and become exceptional Persian heroes caught in a corrupt, despotic world.

## The Siege of Isfahan

Fairy tales such as *Amanzolide* presented French readers with "polite" Persian individuals who recognized and combated the degeneracy around them. However, it was the invasion of the Safavid Empire and the siege of the capital city of Isfahan that brought the truly horrific state of Persia to French attention. News of the political turmoil in the shah's realm reached France after the Beg's visit in the mid-1720s. The military weakness and ineffective administration of the Safavid Empire led to the Afghan rebellion in 1721. The Afghans moved into Persia and besieged Isfahan for six months, from March through October 1722. The news of the siege and the ensuing bloodshed resulted in a reevaluation of the country's history. Political chaos and brutality became hallmarks of the Persian Empire in the eighteenth century.

The *Mercure de France* reported the Afghan invasion of Persia in 1726 in a series of short and sketchy paragraphs. During the siege, Europeans, including members of the Dutch East India Company, who were resident in Isfahan reported on the events. Europeans survived the tumult and negotiated with the succeeding Afghan shah, Mahmud. The French consul in Persia, Ange de Gardane, arranged through his Armenian interpreter for the protection of Frenchmen by Shah Mahmud. These Europeans in Isfahan sent news of events via offices in the Ottoman Empire and Russia, and the accounts were then published in European journals.[39] In November 1726, the *Mercure* printed a comprehensive account of the siege.[40] Another, more detailed account of the siege, the *Histoire de la dernière revolution de Perse*, based its text upon the memoirs of a Polish Jesuit missionary, Father Judasz Thaddeus Krusinski, who lived in Isfahan from 1707 to 1728 and again in the 1740s.[41]

Krusinski was part of a group of Jesuits, supported by French and Polish efforts, that sought to link Armenians to the Pope and find a new land route to China via Isfahan or the Caucasus.[42] The Polish missionary was revered for his linguistic skills and, during his years in Persia, was in close contact with Shah Husayn and subsequently the Afghan shah Mahmud. Krusinski's text was translated and edited by a fellow Jesuit priest, Father du Cerceau, and published in 1728.[43] Cerceau rearranged Krusinski's material chronologically, made stylistic improvements, and added a short history of the Safavid kings that he took from French journals.[44] The *Histoire de la dernière revolution* reassessed the events in Persia and revised the *Mercure*'s account.[45] The text was popular with contemporaries and was translated into various European languages, and into Turkish at the command of the grand vizir.[46] The text became the primary source on the siege for eighteenth-century scholars, including Montesquieu, and Krusinski's memoirs still remains the best source on the event for modern-day historians of Europe and the Middle East.

The *Mercure*'s account lays out the tragic tale of Safavid decay and takes advantage of the general reading public's ignorance of recent events in Persia by exaggerating the unforeseen and abrupt nature of the Afghan invasion.[47] Although travelers had relayed concerns about decadence and decay, French lay readers had been unaware of serious domestic problems that threatened the monarchy until the siege. The collapse of the great Persian Empire seemed sudden, the *Mercure* claims, because French readers "had up until [the publication of its article] only imperfect notions of this great event."[48]

The *Mercure* observes that Persia was "one of the greatest and most flourishing monarchies of Asia" prior to the events of the siege.[49] The *Mercure*'s article reminds its readers of Isfahan's beauty and the civilization that would be lost in the invasion:

> The city of Isfahan is without dispute one of the largest cities in the world; it has in its circumference at least 10 places in common with France, without counting several considerable and well-fortified suburbs. It is true that it is not populated to the scale of its size because, in addition to the public squares which are great in number and have a large expanse, there is not a single house without a courtyard –even that of an artisan is not without one in which a large and magnificent garden with many trees is planted. When one perceives the city from a distance, one thinks one is seeing a large and vast forest in which one has built some houses.[50]

Next, the *Mercure* focuses on the shah's mishandling of the situation.[51] The *Mercure* accurately portrays the shah as a poor leader who listened to the counsel of treacherous advisors during the Afghan invasion.[52] The shah is also described as a terrible judge of character, a man who entrusts the city to deceitful characters such as the Vali of Arabistan, who betrays the Safavids.[53]

The nobles and the general population of Isfahan realized that their survival necessitated a revolt and turned on their monarch.[54] The *Mercure* describes the shah's reaction: "But the King, out of great fear combined with a shameful cowardice, shut himself in his palace and insisted on never listening to their demands. Instead, he took offense [at their pleas] as if they were a revolt against his own person."[55] The shah resorted to violence: "He ordered with an unprecedented carelessness and cruelty to have them shot and removed from his palace."[56] In the midst of the deteriorating situation, the *Mercure* narrates the tale of Ahmad Agha, who according to historian Laurence Lockhart was a respected white eunuch. He gathered an army among the inhabitants of the city, which the *Mercure* reports numbered thirty thousand, in hopes of appeasing the people and dispelling any anger directed at the king.[57] The journal describes how this hero left the city followed by his men and, after killing 2,000 Afghans and forcing many others to flee, created a passage for provisions to the city. This resulted in temporary joy within the city until the traitorous Vali of Arabistan leaked information to the opposing side, brought about the defeat of Ahmad Agha, and returned the city to a sense of hopelessness.[58]

The *Mercure* characterizes Ahmad Agha as a tragic figure who, despite his good intentions, suffered for the treachery of the Vali. The shah once again miscalculated and punished Ahmad Agha for his defeat and for defying his commands. The shah publicly rebuked the hero and would not listen to any warnings against the character of the Vali.[59] "The King would not listen to anything about it. Ahmad Agha, too sensitive to the reproaches made against him, and believing that he could not live in honor with such an incomparable insult, the following night swallowed poison from which he died four or five hours later."[60]

The characters in the *Mercure*'s account are real: Ahmad Agha and the Vali of Arabistan did surround Shah Husayn and vied for power. Both the *Mercure* and the *Histoire* relate similar versions of events and portray Ahmad Agha as the hero who died by poisoning himself.[61] Yet the *Mercure*'s article portrays the fall of Persia as unexpected.

The *Histoire*, by contrast, suggests that the Safavids had undergone a long process of decline and traces the underlying causes of the empire's undoing to Shah Abbas I's reign. Although the text describes Abbas as "not only the greatest King of the Sophy Race, but one of the most able and wisest monarchs that ever reigned," it attributes the beginnings of despotism in Persia to his reign.[62] "Shah Abbas having resolved to establish a system of despotic and arbitrary government in his kingdom, such as it has been since his time, he made it his business to ruin the veteran troops, and the ancient families of the country."[63] Here Cerceau references the state's deliberate disempowerment of the Qizilbash families, the Turkish tribes that had fought to establish the Safavid dynasty.

Qizilbash power had proved detrimental to the shah's power under Shah Tahmasp, who witnessed fighting among the tribes that almost toppled his throne. As a result, Safavid shahs tried to balance the power of the Qizilbash tribes with a new *ghulam*, or system of slave elites. These Armenians, Georgians and Circassians slaves had no tribal ties and owed their allegiance to the shah. Further, through their conversion to Islam from Christianity, they participated in a new cultural landscape that shifted away from the messianic religion of the Qizilbash to a more disciplined form of Islam that served state centralization.[64] The *Histoire* looks to the decline of the noble military class of the Qizilbash as an early sign of a larger decline. It claims that "if the events in Persia have been so astonishing, when taken only in general view, and according to the very imperfect ideas we can form of it from the gazettes and other public newspapers, we may affirm, it will appear still more amazing, when we come to give a particular account of the remote causes and events that prepar'd the way to it for more than twenty years."[65]

The book calls the demise of Shah Husayn "a lesson that good nature and humanity, when carried too far, and unattended with knowledge and virtue necessary for a King, degenerates into dastardy, which is much more likely to make a prince despis'd than belov'd." Further, foreigners learn "that if upheavals so extraordinary and flagrant as this of Persia, are not always the consequences of such contempt, 'tis only because there are not persons of sufficient abilities at all times, and in all countries, to lay hold of the opportunities, and at the same time, ambitious and resolute enough to run all the hazards of it."[66] The *Histoire*, therefore, attributes the ultimate demise of Persia to long-term causes and to Shah Husayn's negligence in the short term: "While all things ran thus to decay, both in the country and the capital, Shah Husayn lay, as it were, buried in his harem; abandoning the rest of his dominions to the discretion of his principal eunuchs."[67] The shah remained apathetic about state matters, and "he seemed to have no taste for any other place of pleasure but this [his harem], which engrossed all his thoughts, and the expenses of which swallowed up the greatest part of his finances. He looked upon his harem as his particular kingdom, and the only one that deserv'd his regard."[68]

Cerceau's text shows how the Persian Empire, once great, degenerated into despotism and corruption. Abbas, who ruled over its brightest period, also planted the seeds for despotism and ruin. Persia, unlike the Ottoman Empire, had never been perceived as the "standard model" or "illustration" of despotism, yet its demise served as the ultimate warning of what could happen when despotism infiltrates government and kings become careless about state affairs.[69] French readers could only reflect on their own late monarch, who had indulged in scandalous affairs with his mistresses. During the early reign of Louis XV, slander against Louis XIV and his mistresses continued to be distributed. Various texts also accused the regent of sodomy and incest.[70] Cerceau's

*Histoire* warned, "One has cause to look upon this event as an extraordinary lesson of providence to all princes, especially those of Asia, where most of them stagnate in sloth and effeminacy."[71]

Despite their different approaches, both the *Mercure*'s account and Cerceau's *Histoire* present French readers with the horrors of Persia's decline. The *Mercure* announces: "All that is most horrible that is said to have occurred in the city of Jerusalem during its siege by Titus and Vespasian is brought to life in our time in the city of Isfahan, and I could even say that this is even worse than that."[72] The texts describe the famine that crippled Isfahan and the murder of many members of the royal family. Bread prices skyrocketed, and starvation affected everyone: mothers even resorted to eating their children. After six months of siege, Shah Husayn surrendered to the Afghan leader, Mahmud. However, the surrender did not end the violence. Although Mahmud treated the shah and his courtiers kindly at first, he soon changed his mind and had the royal princes brutally murdered. For the next thirty years, French readers read about the instability that swept Persia, including the cruelty of the reign of Nadir Shah, who succeeded the Safavids.[73]

## The Reverse of the Image: An "Enlightened" Ottoman Empire Replaces a "Civilized" Persia

At the same time as the image of a decaying Persia reached France, the image of the Ottoman Empire softened. The Ottoman Empire had long been the model for tyranny, in sharp contrast to Christian monarchies.[74] The Ottoman Empire served as the illustration of the term "despotic power" for Europeans starting in the sixteenth century.[75] The Venetian ambassadors, for instance, began to discuss the corruption of the Turks after 1600.[76] Antoine Furetière's dictionary of 1690 announced, "The Grand Seigneur [the Ottoman Sultan] governs *despotiquement*."[77] By the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire represented the worst form of illegitimate government: the sultan ruled through arbitrary will without hereditary nobility to check his power. In European narratives, the Ottomans operated on the inversion of all the principles of natural law.[78]

This was particularly problematic for France, which had a long tradition of alliances with the Ottoman Empire dating back to the sixteenth century and had to defend this alliance against critics who believed France should form its alliances along religious lines according to its profession as a Catholic state.

In justifying its alliance, the French crown did not refute the European condemnation of the Ottoman Empire. Instead, France produced propaganda that defended the alliance as a defense of Christians in Ottoman lands. Further, the French crown argued that if France had not formed the alliance first, Spain—characterized as the "other Turk"—would have done so, and the "two Turks" would have divided up Europe between them. Additionally, the defenders of the French-Ottoman alliance contended that there was no religious restriction against alliances with non-Christians.[79]

Despite the justification of the Turko-French alliance, both defenders and critics of the French monarchy continued to compare the French king with the image of the tyrannical sultan. For instance, Michel de Marolles, a churchmen, writer, and translator, defended Mazarin, who was the first minister during the regency of Louis XIV, from

charges of tyranny by claiming that unlike the sultan, the French crown defended the liberty of its subjects. Critics, in contrast, referred to Louis XIV as a "Turk" for infringing on the liberties of his Huguenot subjects.[80]

Thomas Kaiser argues that a cultural rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire occurred in the eighteenth century, beginning with Antoine Galland's *Mille et une nuits.* The Oriental tales and novels produced a "softer" image of the Turkish Empire and Islamic culture.[81] The stories familiarized the French with Ottoman culture.[82] Further, the victories of Austrians and Russians over the Ottomans lessened the fear that the empire once inspired in Europeans. The 1721 visit of the Ottoman ambassador, Mehmed Efendi, reflected the changing tone. The regency carefully planned the visit to distract the French public from France's troubles, especially the collapse of John Law's banking system, with a grand spectacle.[83] Saint-Simon declares, "Paris witnessed a spectacle she was little accustomed to which made the other major powers of Europe extremely jealous."[84] Efendi's previous experience in the West also played a part in ensuring the success of his visit. He was present at the signing of the Passarowitz Treaty, which concluded the second war between the Ottomans, Russians, and Austrians.[85] As a result, the ambassador was attuned to Western culture and eager to please his French hosts—qualities that the preceding Ottoman ambassador to France in 1669, Suleiman Aga, lacked.[86] Writings about Mehmed praised him for his interest in French culture, unlike any ambassador before him. Memorialists and articles extolled him for his good taste, civilized behavior, and enlightened interests.[87]

In 1742, another embassy, led by Mehmed's son Said Efendi, generated even greater admiration for Turkish culture. The 1742 portrait of Said by Jacques-André Joseph Aved portrays the Ottoman ambassador as an enlightened individual sitting by a desk stacked with books, writing tools, and scientific instruments, including a globe and a telescope.[88] The painting received tremendous attention and applause at the Salon of 1742. Aved gave the portrait to Louis XV, who had it hung in the Salle des Gardes in the Château de Choisy and became a great fan of the ambassador, socializing with him frequently and requesting his presence at numerous court events.[89] Said Efendi's popularity set off the fashion for *turqueries* (French imitations of Turkish customs) that lasted from 1742 through the 1760s.[90] "Sultanas" became a common term for the royal mistresses who served in the French "harem."[91] Madame de Pompadour hired Carle Van Loo to paint images of sultanas for her bedroom. However, the most important trend that followed the Turkish embassy was an attack on French perceptions of Turkish despotism. By the late eighteenth century, Voltaire and other writers had undermined the image of Ottoman despotism. Voltaire declared that the sultan did not rule unchecked but was bound to the laws of Islam and could not act solely on his own will.[92] Further, one can argue that the revolution still ongoing in Persia brought to light the virtues of the Ottoman Empire.

The French obsession with Turkish culture and the shift away from the Ottoman Empire as the symbol of despotism made room for Persia to serve as the primary example of despotism by the end of the eighteenth century. The claim was that the glorious and civil Persia of the seventeenth century had devolved into the ruin of the eighteenth century due to debauched shahs. The Ottoman Empire, which never had held as lofty a place in the French imagination in terms of civility and luxury but also never had reached as devastating an end as Persia, served as an example of a moderate

Oriental empire, with which Frenchmen could now contrast and compare themselves and which they could even imitate.

## Persia: The Model of Despotism

The change in the perception of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century made room for a new model of Asian decadence. Persia, although viewed as a center of courtesy and an enemy of the despotic Ottomans, became an example of tyranny in the seventeenth century. In the European view, Persia shared the despotic features of all Asian governments: it lacked a check on the power of the sovereign and maintained a corrupt palace structure that included a harem.[93] The primary sources for this belief were the accounts of early travelers, like Chardin, who remarks, "Republican government is unknown in Persia, and therefore . . . [Asians] will always be incapable of conceiving of the administration of the sovereign power by several equal men."[94] Chardin points out that despite the civility of the Persians, they were still plagued by arbitrary rule: "As civil and as polished as [the Persians] are, nonetheless they do nothing out of magnanimity (*générosité*) which is a virtue that one might say is unknown in the East." He continues, "As fortunes and bodies are enslaved by an utterly despotic and arbitrary power, hearts and minds are as well. They do nothing except from interest, that is to say from hope [of reward] or from fear, and they have trouble conceiving that there are countries where men serve or hold office out of simple virtue and without other recompense."[95] Persia became part of the larger despotic fantasy of Asia.[96]

The news of the decline of Persia stirred an intellectual reaction that pushed Persia ahead of the Ottoman Empire as the model for despotism. The events in Persia represented the inevitable collapse of an Oriental despotic government that European thinkers had predicted. The violence and chaos that followed the siege shocked European writers, including Montesquieu and Voltaire. Many penned their thoughts on the series of catastrophes that hit Persia. The *Mercure de France* announced, "Everybody wants to write a history of the latest change in government in Persia. I always said that this Event does not have a lack of historians."[97]

Writers tried to explain how Persia, once the most civilized of all Asian empires, could fall to the lowest of extremes. Voltaire praises seventeenth-century Persia: "Persia at that time was more civilized than Turkey: the manners of the people were gentler; the arts were in greater esteem. . . . The sciences met also with greater encouragement: there was not a city that had not several colleges for the teaching of polite literature."[98] He continues, "Upon the whole, the accounts we have of Persia, give us reason to think, that there was no monarchy upon earth, where the people more fully enjoyed the rights of humanity."[99] He adds:

> No nation in the eastern parts of the world had such numerous resources against that bane of life, the lassitude of mind. They met in spacious coffee houses, where some were employed in sipping this liquor, which was not introduced into Europe till towards the end of the seventeenth century. . . . This shews them to be a sociable nation, and we find by all accounts that they

> deserved to be happy. They were so, it is said, under Shah Abbas, surnamed the Great.[100]

However, Voltaire laments Persia's decay: "Among all the scenes of cruelty and misery, that we have been viewing since the time of Charlemain, there is none more shocking than that which followed the decline of Ispahan."[101] Further, "Persia has been for these thirty years what Germany was before the peace of Westphalia, what France was at the time of Charles VI, or England during the wars of the white and red roses. But Persia hath fallen from a more flourishing state to a lower degree of misery."[102]

Like Voltaire, Montesquieu considered Persia a country in decline.[103] Montesquieu drew upon travel literature and a wide variety of fairy tales and journals for knowledge on the Orient.[104] He most certainly was aware that Persia had a distinct place in the French imagination. When choosing the Orientals best suited to critique France in his *Persian Letters*, he would not have ignored Jean Chardin's announcement that "Persians are the most civilized people of the East. . . . The polite men amongst them are upon a level with the politest men of Europe."[105] This message and the comparisons between France and Persia, repeated by other travelers and reaffirmed in fairy tales, the articles and images of Mohammad Reza Beg's visit, and finally *Amanzolide*, undoubtedly would have reached Montesquieu, an avid reader and researcher.[106] Persia, which served as the Oriental mirror of France through the seventeenth century, served as a startling warning of what could happen if despotism and a debauched ruler took hold.

Montesquieu, struck by the downfall of the Safavid Empire, referred to Persia in his discussion on despotic governments in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748). Concerning the despotism of the Persian shahs, he writes: "In Persia, when the king has condemned someone, no one may speak to him further about it or ask for a pardon. If he were drunken or mad, the decree would have to be carried out just the same."[107] Montesquieu declares, "One cannot speak of these monstrous governments without shuddering."[108] Persian power, government, and control, based on the principle of fear as in all despotic states, could only survive as long as the shah of Persia remained the most feared. "The Sophi of Persia, deposed in our time by Myrrweis [the Afghan leader and father of Mahmud], saw his government perish before it was conquered because he had not spilled enough blood."[109] By the time *The Spirit of the Laws* was published, Persia's government no longer signaled refinement but a "monstrous" example of despotism.

The news of the siege cemented Persia as a preeminent example of a deteriorating despotic state in the popular imagination as well. Persia served as a warning to France in popular works such as *Mémoires secrets pour servir a` l'histoire de Perse* (1745), a roman à clef.[110] Robert Darnton calls these novels "guessing games" in which one would have to figure out which real personality fit with the story. In the *Mémoires sécretes*, France was disguised as Persia and Louis XV as the shah. The story appears as a history of Europe masked as Asia on the eve of the outbreak of the war of 1740. All the major European powers appear. England, for example, is Japan, and Spain is China. The story also revolves around the domestic affairs of France, with descriptions and gossip of all the key courtiers and ministers, including the king's mistresses. The descriptions were often unflattering and exposed the French court's weaknesses. Louis XV, for instance, was described as "a good king, a good master, capable of friendship . . . [but] more feeble than great, too indifferent to glory, indolent, hating and fearing work, ungenerous, not

unintelligent but seeing everything through the eyes of the *Athematdou* [first minister] *Ismael-Beg* [Fleury], on whom he was dependent, too dependent; in a word [he was] a prince lacking the soul that sets apart a true king."[111] The *Mémoires Sécretes* still likened France to Persia; but now the comparison suggested profligacy and despotism.

## A Cautionary Reflection

Although the Ottoman Empire had served in the French imagination as the quintessential despotic state, it was Persia and not the Ottoman Empire that degenerated into violence and disorder. The defeat of the Safavids altered France's vision of Persia. Once considered a great and ancient empire, Persia had degenerated into brutal chaos and then political dependence. The tragic downfall of Persia became a lesson for European monarchies, especially France, of the terrible consequences of arbitrary rule. Seventeenth-century French scholars and artists identified with Persia and saw it as a kindred country. Texts imagined Persia, like France, as the home of civility, good manners, genteel conversation, and a superior *savoir vivre*. However, the collapse of the Safavid Empire and the shocking brutality that followed through the next century revealed what could happen to even the most civilized countries: if Persia, the model of civility, had degenerated, so could France. The Persian mirror, which had served Louis XIV's propaganda team and French writers as a reflection of French glory, shifted to reflect a warning of French failures and demise.

# Epilogue

## *The Beg and the* Persian Letters

With the publication of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* in 1721, Persians moved from objects of curiosity—as witnessed in the reception of Mohammad Reza Beg in 1715—to objects of critical reflection. The Beg drew a great deal of attention with his exotic behavior, clothing, and entourage. Painters, printmakers, and journalists recorded the ambassador's parade into Paris, his grand entry into Versailles, and his spectacular meeting with Louis XIV in the Hall of Mirrors. Prints also circulated of the foreign ambassador's personal tastes and habits, such as his frequent bathing, polo playing, tea drinking, and smoking. The Parisian public crowded in the streets to see the ambassador during his conspicuous ventures through the city.

One of the prints of the ambassador (see Figure 8.1) depicts his entry into Paris and captures the excitement he generated as he passed through the Place Royale, the present-day Place des Vosges. In the image, the Beg rides on horseback in a procession surrounded by his entourage, flying the Persian Safavid banner. The print highlights the crowd struggling to glimpse the foreigner. An audience peers over the fence to watch the parade, while the guards beat back other curious onlookers with large pikes. A brave woman in the foreground skirts around the guards for a closer look at the unusual figure of the Beg and his Armenian escorts. Chaos ensues as women and men are thrown to the ground; in the right-hand corner of the print, a dog munches on the food from a fallen basket. The spectators seem to come from all classes of society. Many of the men and women in the crowd appear well dressed, in fine coats and dresses.

The image captures the depth and breadth of the curiosity inspired by the Beg's visit. The Baron de Breteuil, *introducteur des ambassadeurs* at the time, who accompanied the Beg during this very parade and is most likely the Frenchman pictured riding next to the Beg in the image, marveled at the tremendous interest the Beg stirred in all ranks of society: "Yet, it was not just the common people who hurried to see him in Paris: the ladies . . . and many men of the highest ranking were also curious, and I witnessed such huge crowds where he lived, and, often, he had more than forty women at a time in his bedroom and as many who waited outside to enter."[1]

Six years later, Montesquieu pictures a similar reaction to the appearance of his two fictional Persians, Rica and Usbek in Paris:


*Figure 8.1* Mohammad Reza Beg, the Persian ambassador to France in 1715, made his entry parade into Paris at the Place Royale, which is today the Place des Vosges. Frenchmen desperately tried to see this celebrity in person and even climbed the gate for a better view. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

> The inhabitants of Paris carry their curiosity almost to excess. When I arrived, they looked at me as though I had been sent from Heaven: old men and young, women and children, they all wanted to see me. If I went out, everyone stood at the windows; if I was in the Tuileries, I immediately became the center of a circle; even the women surrounded me, like a rainbow composed of a thousand colors. If I was at a show, I would see a hundred lorgnettes focused on my face straight away. In a word, never was a man seen as much as I was. It made me smile sometimes, to hear people who had hardly ever been out of their rooms saying to each other: 'You've got to admit, he really does look Persian.' It was incredible: I found portraits of me everywhere; I saw multiples of myself in every shop and on every mantelpiece, so greatly did people fear they had not had a good enough look at me.[2]

When Montesquieu's Persian travelers happen to witness the arrival of a Persian embassy, they poke fun at the ambassador, while emphasizing the similarities between French and Persians: "There has appeared here a personage got up as a Persian ambassador, who has insolently played a trick on the two greatest kings in the world."[3] Montesquieu deliberately places his two fictional visitors to France at the diplomatic event in order to establish a parallel between France and Persia, to the detriment of both: "He [The ambassador] has made himself the laughing-stock of a

nation [France] which claims to be the most civilized in Europe, and has made people say in the West that the King of Kings [shah of Persia] rules only over barbarians."[4]

Scholars of the *Persian Letters* tend to focus on the use of the Orient as an imaginary place.[5] By the time of the Beg's visit, the French were somewhat familiar with Persia through travelogues and translations of Persian literature, but for the most part Persia was still distant and unknown. Yet Persia was a reality—a place where French missionaries, travelers, and diplomats had visited. Frenchmen had tangible evidence of Persia through texts and material culture as shown throughout these pages.[6]

Montesquieu explains why he picked Persia and not another Asian country to mirror France. In the *Letters*, an association clearly exists between Persia and France, one that is not present, for example, with their shared Islamic neighbor, the Ottoman Empire. Usbek, one of Montesquieu's fictional Persian travelers to Europe, remarks on the connection between the French and Persian capitals: "We are now at Paris, the proud rival of the city of the sun [Isfahan]."[7] Paris is considered by the Persian tourists as "the capital of the European empire" and praised as a great city like Isfahan.

Montesquieu creates an affinity between Persians and Frenchmen through his descriptions of Rica and Usbek. As presented by Montesquieu, Persians possess qualities respected by the French, and these characteristics enable them to skillfully scrutinize French society. Rica is young but extremely sharp and witty. Usbek remarks about his friend, "Rica is writing you a long letter. He says that he has a great deal to tell you about this country [France]. The liveliness of his mind is such that he readily understands everything." Usbek laments, "I myself, who think more slowly, am not in a position to tell you anything."[8] Rica's wit resembles *l'esprit*, a quality valued by Frenchmen into the eighteenth century.

Despite Usbek's self-proclaimed shortcomings, he has a virtuous character and follows his religion scrupulously. Although he lacks Rica's wit, his integrity is another asset that the French celebrated. His virtue is attested to by his friend Mirza, who writes to him regarding matters of religion and philosophy: "I have often heard you say that men were born to be virtuous, and that justice is a quality which is proper to them as existence. Please explain to me what you mean."[9] Usbek's ethics enable him to see the hypocrisy of Catholicism. Having learned how a priest aids a sinner to enter heaven, Usbek says, " 'Father . . . that is all very well, but how do you manage about Heaven? If the Shah had a man at his court who behaved towards him as you do towards your God, putting distinctions between his commands and explaining to his subjects the different circumstances in which they had to carry them out or could transgress them, he would have him impaled on the spot.' I bowed to my dervish, and left without waiting for his reply."[10] Usbek sarcastically chastises the priest's corrupt practice of manipulating the rules of salvation.

Montesquieu creates characters in the *Persian Letters* to draw out parallels between the French and Persian court, creating an ideal mirror. Back in Persia, Usbek's virtue clashes with Persian court culture. Montesquieu characterizes him as familiar with the treachery and fraudulence of the Persian court, in order to better equip him to recognize and criticize it in French courtiers. Usbek complains about the artifice needed to succeed in the Safavid royal circle. He laments, "I appeared at court in my earliest youth. I can truthfully say that my heart did not become corrupt. I even undertook a great

project: I dared to behave virtuously there. As soon as I had recognized vice for what it was, I kept away from it; but approached it again in order to expose it. I took truth to the steps of the throne. I spoke a language hitherto unknown there: I put flattery out of countenance and, at the same time, astonished both the flatterers and their idol."[11]

Usbek's voyage to Europe allowed him to escape jealous enemies at court. He recounts the events at the Isfahan court: "But when I saw that my sincerity had made enemies, that I had aroused the ministers' jealousy, without gaining my sovereign's favour, that in a corrupt court, I could only preserve myself by own feeble virtue, I resolved to leave. . . . I went to the king, indicated that I wanted to instruct myself in Western knowledge, and implied that he might derive some benefit from my travels. I found favour in his eyes, departed, and deprived my enemies of their victim."[12] Montesquieu fabricates Usbek's experience at the Persian court to parallel the descriptions of French court life by renowned courtiers, such as the Duc de Saint-Simon, who famously chronicled the intrigues of Versailles.

While Montesquieu's Persians connect to Europeans and, even more strikingly, Frenchmen, they distance themselves from the Ottomans. Montesquieu highlights the distinction between Persians and the Ottomans. Usbek despairs, "I felt a secret pain when I lost sight of Persia, and found myself among the faithless Osmanlis."[13] Through Usbek, Montesquieu paints the Ottoman Muslims, who are Sunni, in a negative light compared to the Persians Muslims, who are Shiites. "As I penetrated further into this profane land," writes Usbek, "I had the impression that I was becoming profane myself." His faith is disassociated from Ottoman Islam. Usbek frowns upon the liberty with which the Ottoman military officials abuse the Christians and Jews living among the Sunni Ottomans. "Impunity is the rule under this harsh government: the Christians, who cultivate the land, and the Jews, who raise taxes, suffer innumerable abuses of power."[14]

In 1721, prior to the fall of the Safavid Empire, the Persians in the *Letters* anticipate the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Usbek emphasizes the frailty of the Turkish state: "I was amazed to see the weakness of the Ottoman Empire. It is a diseased body, preserved not by gentle and moderate treatment, but by violent remedies which ceaselessly fatigue and undermine it. Further, I have marked with astonishment the weakness of the empire of the Osmanli: a diseased body, it is not supported by a plain and temperate diet, but by violent remedies, which exhaust and waste it away continually. . . . That my dear Rustan, is a true description of this empire, which inside two hundred years will be the scene of the triumphs of some conqueror."[15] Here Montesquieu's characters expect the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and do not foresee that the weaknesses of their native Safavid Empire could lead to destruction.

However, the image of the two Islamic countries changed as events in Persia unfolded. In the *Persian Letters*, the rebellion in the harem simply warned Frenchmen of the despotic tendencies of Bourbon France. But although news of the troubles in Persia had not reached all French readers, the fictitious rebellion in Usbek's harem would soon herald the larger rebellion against the Safavid dynasty. On the heels of the publication of the *Persian Letters*, Frenchmen would soon learn how the eunuch's message to his master depicted the actual state of Persia: "Things have come to such a pass that it is no longer to be endured. . . . What is happening here is dreadful; I myself tremble at the brutal account that I am about to give you."[16] The Persian mirror had transformed to reveal a

destroyed empire and state of chaos—no longer polite, civil, and luxurious like France. The story of Persia's downfall became the cautionary example for France, warning what would happen if it continued to tread the path of despotism while the Ottoman Empire assumed a more civilized image.

* * *

The Persian mirror of the seventeenth century can serve as a model for France's relationship with other countries—China in the eighteenth century, for instance. In France and elsewhere in Europe, the vogue for China manifested itself not only through Enlightenment texts but also through *chinoiserie*, a style of decorative arts that connotes the appetite for Chinese objects, whether made in Europe or authentically Chinese.[17] Enlightenment authors such as Voltaire celebrated China as an enlightened despotism. Jean-Baptiste du Boyer, also known as the Marquis d'Argens, wrote the *Lettres Chinoises* (1739–42), modeled on Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. In these letters, Chinese travelers were made to expose faults in French society and politics and praise aspects of Chinese government.[18] Voltaire praised the longevity of the Chinese empire in his play *L'Orphelin de la Chine*. In the 1760s, François Quesnay, a member of the economic reforming group known as the Physiocrats, celebrated China's enlightened absolutism as an ideal model for the French crown. The French knew about China from Jesuit works, but it was still a far-flung country with which France had relatively little contact.[19]

Persia etched a sharp image in the French imagination in the century prior to Montesquieu. An enemy of the Ottoman infidels, Persia appeared as a potential ally to Catholics who dreamed of a renewed Crusade. Frenchmen were attracted to Persia's adherence to an alternative form of Islam, Shiism. Further, Persian literature, both fake and authentic, resonated with French readers. In Persia, the French found a similar appreciation of *politesse* and a court society. Ambassadorial visits between France and Persia reveal how the two monarchies negotiated and shared ideas of pomp and status.

Yet the study of French ideas of Persia illustrate how Persia could be conceived differently depending on the context. Chardin, for example, in his *Coronation of Soleiman* established Persia as a model for comparison to French monarchy and society in the vein of the mirror-of-princes genre. Translator-authors of Persian texts and tales, particularly André du Ryer and François Pétis de la Croix, saw in Persia courtliness and manners akin to those of the French. They also saw a despotic world that reflected French absolutism. Charles Le Brun forged a strong link between Louis XIV's court and that of Persia through his first painting for the king. His portrayal of the Persian women emphasized their dignified behavior, which in turn brought forth the admirable qualities of Louis XIV as Alexander.

Diplomacy reveals yet another French picture of Persia. The example of two men involved in French-Persian embassies, Michel and Breteuil, show a practical use of the mirror. Both men negotiated with Persian officials by drawing on common understandings between France and Persia to pursue their diplomatic goals. Michel and Breteuil recognized in Persia their own institutions, such as monarchical pomp and notions of precedence. The case of Breteuil, who hosted the Persian ambassador at home in France in 1715, shows how the French altered their protocol to accommodate the Beg's differences, especially when it came to his exotic habits and religion. Michel,

on the other hand, had to figure out how to adapt to the requirements of the Safavid government. Yet neither wished to reduce the honors paid to the French monarchy. For that reason, they used cultural stereotypes to defend themselves and fault the Persians for disruptions to the process of negotiation.

In light of the demise of the Safavid Empire in the early eighteenth century, a new image of Persia arose, one that forewarned France that its absolutist monarchy could degenerate if it did not heed its critics. Here Persia becomes a scrying mirror that portends despotism. The Persian mirror had evolved from a comparison of positive and negative aspects of France in the seventeenth century to one that heralded a pessimistic future for the French crown and society by the mid-eighteenth century.

The variety of and flux in French interpretations of Persia in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries show the complexity of relationships between Asia and Europe. Scholars must continue to reevaluate associations between East and West in light of new sources that raise new contexts. The account of the French relationship with Persia affirms Persia's important place in the evolution of early modern French identity. Persia, seen as a match to many aspects of Louis XIV's France, provided a point of comparison for a variety of Frenchmen, who drew distinctive and complex images that blended fantasy and reality but, above all, spoke to the concerns of the French.

# NOTES

## *Introduction*

1. Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671), epistre.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62.
5. Nabil Matar's approach to English-Moroccan relations also moves away from ideas of Orientalism and Western hegemony. See, for example, *Britain and Barbary 1589–1689* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); *Islam in Britain 1588–1685* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
6. For some examples, see Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes, Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
7. Ina Baghdiantz McCabe shows the impact exotic imports had on France itself and argues that "Orientalism before the very end of the eighteenth century was first and foremost about France." See her *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 293.
8. In the English case, see Matar, *Britain and Barbary 1589–1689; Turks, Moors, and Englishmen*; and *Islam in Britain 1588–1685*.
9. See Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).
10. Like Ina McCabe, this book takes the exotic to be anything perceived to be nondomestic or foreign—in the French case, anything that is believed to come from outside France. See McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*.
11. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 5. Said's idea that "the relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" has been widely influential. This book is in line with scholars who argue that seventeenth-century French ideas of the Orient were not always imperial. See, for example, McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*, 3–7.
12. On Colbert, see Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 3–7.

13. For some examples, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India: Words, People, Empires, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: University Press, 2009); McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*; Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558–1685*; Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Nabil Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Madeleine Dobie, *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Michele Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Faith Beasley, *Versailles Meets the Taj Mahal: François Bernier, Marguerite de La Sablière, and Enlightening Conversations in Seventeenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). Beasley's conclusions that India had a specific effect on seventeenth-century French thought are consistent with the relationship between France and Persia discussed in this body of work. Foreign countries, indeed, had a specific influence on France that should be distinguished from the generalized image of the Orient.
14. See, for example, Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*.
15. For a work that does distinguish between representations of Persia and the Ottoman Empire, see Larry Wolff, *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).
16. Margaret Meserve, for example, provides inspiration for this view. She has pointed out the intricacy and differences of humanist ideas about the Ottoman Empire in the Renaissance to challenge "a single Orientalist rubric." Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).
17. This idea is inspired by Lisa Lowe's conception of Orientalism as a diverse and heterogenous set of ideas. See Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).
18. See, for example, Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).
19. On the similarities between the French and Safavid courts, see Gülru Necipoglu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–42. On royal proximity at the Safavid court, see Rudi Matthee, "A Sugar Banquet for the Shah: Anglo-Dutch Competition at the Iranian Court Shah Sultan Husayn (r. 1694–1722)," *Eurasian Studies* 5 (2006): 195–217. On Louis XIV's France, see Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994). Also see Jean Marie Apostolides, *Le Roi-machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1981).
20. See for example, Nancy Um and Leah Clark, "The Art of Embassy: Situating Objects and Images in the Early Modern Diplomatic Encounter," *Journal of Early Modern History* 20 (2016): 3–18; Michael Auwers, "The Gift of Rubens: Rethinking the Concept of Gift-Giving in Early Modern Diplomacy," *European History Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2013): 421–44; Meredith Martin, "Mirror Reflections: Louis XIV, Phra Narai, and the Material Culture of Kingship," *Art History* 38, no. 4 (September 2015): 652–67.
21. On consumer goods, see McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*.
22. Since the call for a "new diplomatic history" by John Watkins in 2008, scholars from across disciplines have answered with studies on literature, the performing arts, material culture, and ritual. John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008): 1–14. For a review of the diplomatic literature, see Tracey Sowerby, "Early Modern Diplomatic History," *History Compass* 14, no. 9 (September 2016): 441–56. For a few examples, see Ellen Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); Jan Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and*

*the Culture of Diplomacy, 1648–1725* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Lucien Bély is an important author of diplomatic history whose work also informs this book, especially *Espions et Ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990).

## *Chapter 1*

1. Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 111; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (New York: Berg, 2008), 37–100.
2. Henry II, Francis I, Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV are examples of French monarchs who supported pro-Turkish policies in an effort to counteract the power of the Hapsburgs. Jean Aubin describes early sixteenth-century French-Ottoman relations under Louis XII. See Jean Aubin, "La Crise Egyptienne de 1510–1512: Venise, Louis XII et le Sultan," *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 6 (1989). Nicolas de Nicolay is an example of a sixteenth-century French traveler who went to the Ottoman Empire as part of a French diplomatic mission under Henry II. For more on this early attempt at a French-Ottoman alliance, see Nicolas de Nicolay, *Dans L'Empire de Soliman le Magnifique*, ed. Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud and Stéphane Yérasimos (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1989). For a good summary of French-Turkish relations, see McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*. Unlike France, other European powers sought allies against the Ottomans. For example, in 1571, the Papal States, Venice, Spain, and their allies formed the Holy League to counter Ottoman power. For more on the European alliances against the Ottoman Empire, see Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
3. Venice tried to achieve an alliance with Persia in the early sixteenth century. Michele Membré was selected to deliver a letter from the Doge to the shah of Persia, Tahmasp, asking him to enter the war against the Ottomans on the side of the Venetians and its allies. Membre presented his description of his mission, titled "Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia" (1539–42), to the Collegio of Venice in July 1542. See Michele Membre, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539–1542)*, trans. A. H. Morton (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1993).
4. See McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France,* 85, 98; Pierre Benoist, *Le Père Joseph: L'Éminence grise de Richelieu* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2007).
5. Jean Aubin, *Le Latin et l'astrolabe* (Lisbon: Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian Commission Nationale pour les Commémorations des Découvertes Portugaises, 2000), II:283.
6. Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 218.
7. To read more about the founding of the Safavid Empire, see Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006); Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1980), and Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996). For another summary of the founding of the Safavid Empire and its Sufi origins, see Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).
8. Aubin, *Le Latin et l'astrolabe*, II:283. Margaret Meserve provides an in-depth analysis of the rumors of Shah Ismail that reached Europe. See Meserve, "The Sophy: News of Shah Ismail Safavi in Renaissance Europe," *Journal of Early Modern Histo*ry 18 (2014): 579–608.
9. Roger Savory, "Relations Between the Safavid State and Its Non-Muslim Minorities in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations," *Islam and Christian Relations* 14, no. 4 (October 2003): 443.
10. Ibid.
11. See Peter Jackson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), VI:389–91.
12. For more on the mission of António de Gouveia, see John Flannery, *The Mission of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond 1602–1747* (Boston: Brill, 2013). An example

of an analysis of the mission of Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa, see Joan Pau Rubiés, "Political Rationality and Cultural Distance in the European Embassies to Shah Abbas," *Journal of Early Modern History* 20 (2016): 351–89.

13. *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia,* 2 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939), I:70.
14. Ibid., I:68.
15. Chloë Houston, "'Thou Glorious Kingdome, Thou Chiefe of Empires': Persia in Early Seventeenth-Century Travel Literature," *Studies in Travel Writing* 13, no. 2 (June 2009): 141–52.
16. Jackson, *Cambridge History of Iran*, VI:380–96.
17. Francis Richard, ed., *Raphaël du Mans missionaire en Perse au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1995), I:17.
18. Alastair Hamilton and Francis Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 78.
19. Ibid., 17.
20. McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*, 37–100, esp. 84–85.
21. Anthony Levi, *Cardinal Richelieu and the Making of France* (London: Constable, 2000).
22. Ibid.
23. António de Gouveia, *Histoire orientale des grans procès de l'église catholique . . . ,* trans. into Spanish by François Munoz and then into French by F. Jean-Baptiste de Glen (Brussels: H. Verdussen, 1609).
24. Ibid.
25. Alastair Hamilton and Francis Richard, in *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies*, 78, mention these late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century pamphlets; and more recently, they have been examined by Chloë Houston in "Turning Persia: The Prospect of Conversion in Safavid Iran," in *The Turn of the Soul: Representations of Religious Conversion in Early Modern Art and Literature*, ed. Lieke Stelling, Harald Hendrix, and Todd Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 85–107.
26. Houston, "Turning Persia," 90. For an example of an English text that speaks highly of Persia in contrast to the Ottomans, see William Parry, *A New and Large Discourse on the Travels of Sir Anthony Sherley Knight, by Sea, and over Land, to the Persian Empire* (London: Valentine Simmes, 1601).
27. Houston, "Turning Persia."
28. The five leaflets under examination are *La Grande Defaite des Turcs par Saich Ismaël Sophi Roy de Perse, l'an 1580. Et la cause de la haine, & guerres d'entre ces deux grands Monarques* (Paris: Pierre Cheuillot, 1581); La Nouvelle conversion du roy de Perse. Avec la deffaicte de deux cens mil Turcs après sa conversion (Angers: Anthoine Hernault, 1606); *L'Entrée solennelle faicte à Rome aux ambassadeurs du Roy de Perse, le cinquiesme avril 1601. Envoyez à N.S. Père le Pape, pour contracter ligue contre le Turc, et moyenner la réduction de son royaume à la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine. Traduit de l'italien imprimé à Rome* (Paris: I. Mettayer, 1601); *Discours, De La Bataille Nouvellement Perdue par le Turc, Contre le Roy de Perse* (Paris: Etienne Sauvage, 1586); *Relation de ce qui s'est passé entre les armees du grand Seigneur & du Roy du Perse, depuis la fin de l'année mil six cens vingt-neuf iusques à present, où est descrit le troisiesme siege de Babylone* (Paris: Nicolas & Jean de la Coste, 1631).
29. *La Grande Défaite des Turcs*.
30. Ibid.
31. Ros Ballaster mentions that in Europe "the contrast between Sunni and Shi'ite was exploited (if not always accurately) frequently to make parallels with the tensions between Catholic and Protestant in Europe." *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662–1785* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78.
32. *Discours, De la bataille Nouvellement Perdue par le Turc.*
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

36. *La Nouvelle conversion du roy de Perse*.
37. John Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 89.
38. Ibid., 114.
39. Also see Houston, "Turning Persia," 102. Houston discusses the affinities English travelers made between Protestants and Iranian Shiism and notes that one of the Jesuit missionaries in *La Nouvelle Conversion du roy de Perse* is indeed English. The presence of an Englishmen as an agent of Catholic conversion signifies the complex division between European religions and nationalities in efforts to court Shah Abbas.
40. *La Nouvelle conversion du roy de Perse*.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. *L'Entree Solemnelle Faicte a Rome*.
54. Ibid.
55. Also quoted in Michael Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters: Representing the Orient in Seventeenth-Century French Travel Literature* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 154.
56. Roland Mousnier, *L'Homme rouge, ou, La vie du cardinal de Richelieu, 1585–1642* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1992), 195. Also see Gustave Fagniez, *Le Père Joseph et Richelieu: Le Projet de croisade 1616–1625* (Paris: Bureaux de la Revue, 1889), 123. Charles Gonzague was the grandson of Marguerite Paléologue de Montferrat and was the head of the Paléologue family.
57. Guillaume de Vaumas, *L'Éveil missionnaire de la France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1959), 91.
58. Père Joseph, "Mémoire présenté au Roy par le Père Joseph capucin, en suite du voyage qu'il a fait vers le Saint Père par ordre de Sa Majesté," BNF, ms. fr. 15644. Also see Benoist, *Le Père Joseph*, 189–215.
59. Benoist, *Le Père Joseph*, 189–215. Also see de Vaumas, *L'Éveil missionnaire de la France,* 90–94.
60. Père Joseph, "Mémoire présenté au Roy." Also see Benoist, *Le Père Joseph*, 133.
61. Charles Frazee, Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453–1923 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 85–86.
62. See Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) on the image of the Ottoman Empire in the European imagination in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
63. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 85–86.
64. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 16–17.
65. Ibid., 79.
66. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 86–87.
67. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies*, 76; Richard, *Raphaël du Mans*, I:17.
68. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies*, 78. Original letter is located at the BNF.
69. de Vaumas, *L'Éveil missionnaire de la France,* 124.
70. See Francis Richard, "Catholicisme et Islam Chiite au 'Grand Siecle,'" *Euntes Docete* 33 (1980): 369–403.
71. Richard, *Raphaël du Mans*, I:35–45.

72. Ibid.
73. John Gurney, "Pietro della Valle: The Limits of Perception," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49, no. 1 (1986): 104.
74. Ibid., 105.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 106.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 107.
79. Ibid. Pietro della Valle's letters on Persia were edited by Schipano and published in 1658. See Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, il Pellegrino* (Brighton: G. Grancia, 1843).
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid., 108.
82. Ibid.
83. To read more on the Qizilbash, see Masashi Haneda, *Le Chah et les Qizilbas: Le Système militaire Safavide* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1987).
84. Gurney, "Pietro della Valle," 113.
85. Pietro della Valle, *Histoire Apologetique d'Abbas, Roy de Perse . . .* , trans. Jean Baudoin (Paris: Nicolas de la Vigne, 1631).
86. See Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
87. See Anne Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate* (Paris: Société de l'Orient, 1977).
88. See Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters,* 12; and Friedrich Wolfzettel, *Le Discours du voyageur* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), 129.
89. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier . . . en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes . . .* , 2 vols. (Paris: HG. Clouzier et C. Barbin, 1676); Jean Chardin, *Voyage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes Orientales par la Mer Noire & par la Colchide* (London: Moses Pitt, 1686).
90. See Anne Kroell, *Nouvelles d'Ispahan* (Paris: Société d'Histoire de l'Orient, 1979); André Daulier Deslandes, *Les Beautez de la Perse ou la description de ce qu'il y a de plus curieux dans ce royaume . . .* (Paris: Clouzier, 1673); Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters,* 31.
91. François de La Boullaye-le Gouz, *Les Voyages et observations du Sieur La Boullaye Le Gouz* (Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1653). See Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 5.
92. Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19. For more on Colbert's patronage of the arts and sciences, see P. Clément, ed., *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert* (Paris, 1861–82), V:233–650.
93. For further information on Louis XIV's royal propaganda scheme and image, see Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Jean-Marie Apostolides, *Le Roi-machine: spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981); Louis Marin, *Le Portrait du roi* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981).
94. Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).
95. Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France,* 19.
96. Jean de Thévenot, *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant . . .* , 3 vols. (Paris: Louis Billaine, 1664–84). On the subject of the Crown's patronage of Oriental learning, see Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*.
97. Adam Olearius, *Relation du Voyage d'Adam Olearius en Moscovie, Tartarie, et Perse . . .* , trans. Abraham van Wicquefort (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1666); Don Garcias de Silva Figueroa, *L'Ambassade de don Garcias de Silva Figueroa en Perse . . .* , trans. Abraham van Wicquefort (Paris: Louïs Billaine,1667).

    Also see Elio Brancaforte, *Visions of Persia: Mapping the Travels of Adam Olearius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

98. For a good but short summary on the positive and negative views of various travelers regarding Persia, see Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters,* 153–57. Also see Olivier Bonnerot, *La Perse dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1988).
99. See the entry by John Emerson on Jean Chardin in the *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online).
100. Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671), 212. Jean Chardin's English translation appeared in *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies, The First Volume Containing the Author's Voyage from Paris to Ispahan To which is added, The Coronation of this Present King of Persia, Solyman the Third* (London: Moses Pitt, 1686). Quotes are taken from the French version and translated by myself unless otherwise noted.
101. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, 212. On the mission of Nicolas Claude de Lalain, see Jackson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran,* VI:401. Lalain was accompanied by François La Boullaye-le Gouz. See Jean Calmard, "The French Presence in Safavid Persia: A Preliminary Study," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 311 and Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 5.
102. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme,* 214.
103. Pacifique de Provins, *Relation du voyage de Perse* (Paris: Nicolas & Jean de la Coste, 1631), 398.
104. Deslandes, *Les Beautez de la Perse*, 1.
105. Ibid., 40.
106. Gurney, "Pietro della Valle," 113.
107. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, epistre.
108. Ibid.
109. Maurice Crosland, *Science Under Control: The French Academy of Sciences 1795–1914* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14–16. See Roger Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution: The Paris Academy of Sciences, 1666–1803* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).
110. Matthew L. Jones, *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
111. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, epistre.
112. See the entry on *civilité* in the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie Française*, 1st ed. (1694): "Civilité: Honnesteté, courtoisie, maniere honneste de vivre & de converser dans le monde." Also see Antoine Furetière's entry on *civilité* in his *Dictionnaire Universel*, quoted in Stephen Mennell and John Rundell, ed., *Classical Readings in Culture and Civilization* (London: Routledge, 1998). The entry reads, "Manière honnête, douce et polie d'agir, de conserver ensemble."
113. Pacifique de Provins, *Relation du voyage de Perse,* 401.
114. Tavernier, *Les Six voyages,* I:188: "La civilité des Persans est grande."
115. Ibid., I:189. Also quoted in Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters,* 153.
116. Pacifique de Provins, *Relation du voyage de Perse*, 402.
117. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, 158.
118. Ibid., 159–60.
119. Ibid., 166–67.
120. Ibid., 167.
121. On the *Ballet de la nuit*, see Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp, eds., *Ballet de la Nuit: Rothschild B1/16/6* (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press). For a recent reappraisal of the *Ballet de la Nuit*, see Ellen R. Welch, "Fictions of the Courtly Self: French Ballet in the Age of Louis XIV," *Early Modern French Studies* 39, no. 1 (2017): 17–30.
122. On this shift in Louis XIV's propaganda, see Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV.* Also see Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 94.
123. Elio Brancaforte discusses the symbolism of the sun and lion in Persian iconography. He notes that European travelers found parallels between them and European symbols. Brancaforte, *Visions of Persia*, 92–101.

124. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme,* 167.
125. On Shah Abbas II, see Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 42.
126. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme,* 167.
127. Kate Langdon Forhan, *The Theory of Christine de Pizan* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 33–35.
128. Ibid., 30. The definition of a mirror of princes text has been debated. Some scholars narrowly define it as texts that advise only the prince, while others give it a broader definition under which mirror literature reaches a more expansive audience of elites or is directed at particular groups of the ruling class, such as Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames.* Also see the discussion on various definitions of mirror texts in Cary J. Nederman, "The Mirror Crack'd: The Speculum Principum as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages," *The European Legacy* 3 (June 1998): 18–19.
129. Some scholars argue that Machiavelli subverted the mirror-of-princes genre, while others argue that he applied the subversive nature of the genre. See the discussion in Nederman, "The Mirror Crack'd," 18–19, and Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996). On Machiavelli see, for example, Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Mark Hulling, *Citizen Machiavelli* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). A more recent account of Machiavelli's *Prince* as a mirror of princes is Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
130. Mirror-of-prince works generally offered stories or examples for a ruler or ruling class. See Forhan, *The Theory of Christine de Pizan*, 35.
131. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, 167.
132. Ibid., 208–9.
133. Deslandes, *Les Beautez de la Perse*, 29.
134. Ibid., 40.
135. See François de Fénelon, *Telemachus, son of Ulysses*, ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
136. William Farr Church, *Constitutional Thought in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), 22.
137. John J. Hurt, *Louis XIV and the Parlements: The Assertion of Royal Authority* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 12.
138. M. J. C. Vile, *Constitutionalism and the Separation of Powers* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1998), ch. 4.
139. Chardin calls the commander of the musketeers the *general des mousquetaires.* For a good summary of Safavid administration, see Roger Savory's entry "Courts and Courtiers vi. In the Safavid period," in *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online).
140. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, 221.
141. Ibid.
142. Duc de Saint Simon, *The Memoirs of the Duke de Saint-Simon,* trans. and ed. F. Arkwright (New York: Brentano's, 1915).
143. S. Amanda Eurich, "Secrets of the Seraglio: Harem Politics and the Rhetoric of Imperialism in the Travels of Sir John Chardin," in *Distant Lands and Diverse Cultures: The French Experience in Asia, 1600–1700*, ed. Glenn J. Ames and Ronald S. Love (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 56; and see Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience Européene* (Paris: Boivin & Cie, 1935).
144. Ahmad Gunny, "Protestant Reactions to Islam in Late Seventeenth-Century French Thought," *French Studies* 40, no. 2 (April 1986): 129–40.
145. Chardin, *Journal Du Voyage*, preface.
146. Eurich, "Secrets of the Seraglio," 56–57.
147. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, 382.
148. Chardin, *Journal Du Voyage*, 13–43.
149. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, epistre.

150. Ibid., 170. On Abbas II, see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 182–84.
151. Deslandes, *Les Beautez de la Perse*, preface.
152. Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 185.
153. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, epistre.
154. See François-Paul de Lisola, *The Buckler of State and Justice against the Design Manifestly Discovered of the Universal Monarchy, under the Vain Pretext of the Queen of France, Her Pretensions* (London: James Flesher, 1667).
155. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Mars Christianissimus Autore Germano Gallo-Græco: Or, an Apology for the Most Christian King's Taking up Arms Against the Christians* (London: R. Bentley and S. Magnes, 1684). On the criticism of Louis XIV especially his wars against other European states, see Kirsten L. Cooper, "Inventing a French Tyrant: Crisis, Propaganda, and the Origins of Fénelon's Ideal King," Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014. For more on criticism of Louis XIV, see P. J. W. van Malssen, *Louis XIV d'après les pamphlets répandus en Hollande* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1936), 43, 158–59; Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV,* 148.
156. On the treaty of Zuhab, see, for example, Mathee, *Persia in Crisis*, 118–21, and Ernest Tucker, "From Rhetoric of War to Realities of Peace: The Evolution of Ottoman-Iranian Diplomacy Through the Safavid Era," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 81–89.
157. Chardin, *Journal Du Voyage*, preface.
158. Ibid.
159. Ibid.
160. Ibid.
161. This translation is from the English edition. See *The Travels of Sir John Chardin*, 124.
162. See the discussion on travelers and new methods in the seventeenth century in Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 115; Erica Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

## *Chapter 2*

1. According to *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française. Quatrième Édition. T.1* [1762], *honnêteté* refers to civility and good manners. Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*, trans. Teresa Waugh (New York: New York Review of Books, 2005), xiv, explains that it refers to both "ethics and aesthetics."
2. Alastair Hamilton and Francis Richard, specialists in Persian and Arabic studies, have considered how Persian texts entered France via the Ottoman Empire. Alastair Hamilton and Francis Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14. Chronology is the science that deals with measuring time by regular divisions and assigns to events their proper dates.
3. Francis Richard, "Aux origines de la connaissance de la langue persane en France," *Luqman: Annales des Presses universitaires d'Iran* 3, no. 1 (1986–87): 24.
4. Ibid. Also see Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 73–74. Here are some examples of scholars and diplomats who owned Persian manuscripts: Savary de Brèves owned ten Persian volumes; Nicolas de Peiresc owned one Persian codex on the astrolabe; the ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Achille de Harlay de Sancy, owned eight or nine Persian codices; François Hubert, who was the brother of Etienne Hubert, who held the post of professor of Arabic, owned more than twenty Persian, Arabic, and Turkish manuscripts.
5. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 73–74.
6. Richard, *Aux origines de la connaissance*, 23–42.
7. Ibid.
8. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 73–74.

9. See Robert Jones, "The Medici Oriental Press and the Impact of its Arabic Publications on Northern Europe," in *The "Arabick" Interest of the Natural Philosophers in 17th-Century England*, ed. G. A. Russell (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 88–108.
10. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 73–74.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Savary de Brèves's career has been chronicled in ibid., 21.
14. Ibid., 39.
15. Sadi, *Gulistan, ou L'empire des roses*, trans. André du Ryer (Paris: A. de Sommaville, 1634). The author of the *Gulistan*, Sadi, was born in Shiraz, capital of Fars, in 1184. He wrote the *Bustan* and the *Gulistan* between 1257 and 1258. He was able to pursue his studies at the famous University of Nizamiyah in Baghdad, the capital of the Abassid Empire. He was interested in dervishes (Sufis) and their poetic tradition. He left Baghdad in 1226 at the age of forty and returned to Shiraz, where he focused on meditation and poetry. When the Mongols invaded Iraq and Iran, Sadi traveled around Asia, through Afghanistan and Turkestan, for thirty years. Imprisoned by the Crusaders, he was purchased from the Europeans by a rich man from Aleppo and married his daughter. During this time, he made thirteen pilgrimages to Mecca, remarried in Yemen, and traveled through Ethiopia, Egypt, and North Africa. After his long voyage, he returned to Shiraz and became the official poet of Fars. Peace did not last long, and the Mongols laid siege to Baghdad for forty days in 1258. The war resulted in the execution of the Abbasid caliph and the destruction of the great libraries, university, and palace in Baghdad. Yet in the midst of this political chaos, Sadi became renowned throughout the Middle East as a poet and moralist. He died between the ages of 90 and 100. Pierre Seghers, *Le Jardin des Roses de Saadi* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1976), 9–13.
16. On the Islamic mirror-of-princes genre, see Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013) and Jocelyne Dakhlia, "Les Miroirs des Princes Islamiques: Une Modernité Sourde?," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 57, no. 5 (2002): 1191–206.
17. Shaykh Mushrifuddin Sa`di of Shiraz, *The Gulistan (The Rose Garden) of Sadi*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Bethesda, MD: Ibex, 2008), v.
18. Ibid., iv–vii.
19. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 75, 79–80.
20. Ibid., 80.
21. For more specifics on how Du Ryer translated Sadi's work, see ibid., 81–82.
22. Madeleine Dobie, "Translation in the Contact Zone: Antoine Galland's *Mille et une nuits: contes arabes*," in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*, ed. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 36.
23. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum, eds., *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14. Franz Hahn suggests that seventeenth-century translators adapted and did not directly translate foreign-language works. See Franz Hahn, *François Pétis de la Croix et ses Mille et un jours* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002). Hahn cites the original quote from Montesquieu, *Pensées, Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Nagel, 1950), 669. The translation is my own.
24. Sadi, *Gulistan*.
25. Ibid.
26. See Madeleine Dobie's idea that translation and reception is a "cultural process" in "Translation in the Contact Zone," 36.
27. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 83.
28. Ibid.
29. François de la Rochefoucauld, *Réflexions, ou Sentences et maximes morales* (Paris: C. Barbin, 1665).
30. See the entry on *civilité* in the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie Française*, 1st ed. (1694).

31. Elio Brancaforte mentions a connection between *The Rose Garden* and European guides of comportment. Elio Brancaforte, *Visions of Persia: Mapping the Travels of Adam Olearius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 77. Also see Faramaz Behzad, *Adam Olearius' "Persianischer Rosenthal" Untersuchungen zur Übersetzung von Saadis "Golestan" im 17. Jahrhundert* (Götingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).
32. Some examples of French texts on comportment are: Antoine de Nervèze, *La Guide des Courtisans* (Paris: A. du Brueil, 1606); Nicolas Pasquier, *Le Gentilhomme* (Paris: Jean Petitpas, 1611); Jacques de Caillères, *Traicté de la fortune des gens de qualité* . . . (Paris: L. Chamhoudry, 1658).
33. Sadi, *Gulistan*, 22.
34. Ibid., 23.
35. The translations of *L'Honneste homme* are taken from Nicolas Faret, *The art of pleasing at court; being a New translation (with some additions) of an old French book, entitled L'Honneste-Homme; ou, l'art de plaire à la cour. Par le Sieur Faret. Containing, however, some Precepts necessary to be observ'd by both Gentlemen and Ladies, Courtiers and Others* (Birmingham: T. Aris, 1754), 1–2.
36. Sadi, *Gulistan*, 26.
37. Ibid., 27.
38. Faret, *The art of pleasing at court,* 46.
39. Sadi, *Gulistan*, 132.
40. Faret, *The art of pleasing at court,* 85. Faret discusses silence elsewhere, such as 55–56, where he discusses the art of timing silence and conversation.
41. Sadi, *Gulistan*, 98–99.
42. Ibid., 112.
43. Faret, *The art of pleasing at court,* 49.
44. Sadi, *Gulistan*, 60–62.
45. Ibid., 1.
46. André Daulier Deslandes, *Les Beautez de la Perse ou la description de ce qu'il y a de plus curieux dans ce royaume* . . . (Paris: Clouzier, 1673), 70.
47. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies,* 86–87; Gulistan, *Das ist, Königlicher Rosengart: Des persischen Poeten Sadi Durch Johann Friderich Ochssenbach aus Dem frantzösischen in Das Teutsche gebracht* (Tübingen, 1636).
48. Hamilton and Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies*, 86–87.
49. Ibid. Du Ryer's *Rose Garden* also set the stage for another Persian work adapted into French, *Livre des Lumieres ou la Conduite des Roys composée par le sage Pilpay l'Indien, traduit en françois par David Sahid d'Ispahan* (1644), which also influenced La Fontaine.
50. As Richard and Hamilton phrase it, he "conferred on it, rather, an atemporal and universal status"; *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies*, 81.
51. Hahn, *François Pétis de la Croix,* 30–45. Also see, Jacques Chupeau, "Les récits de voyages aux lisières du roman," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* 3 (1977): 536–53.
52. Hahn, *François Pétis de la Croix,* 15–30. Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience Européene* (Paris: Boivin, 1935).
53. See Marc Soriano, *Les Contes de Perrault: Culture savante et traditions populaires* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1968).
54. Ibid.
55. Madeleine Dobie argues for texts to be treated as "contact zones," taking the idea from Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 4. Dobie seeks to "resituate both the translation and its reception within the contact zone, understood not as a geographic space of encounter, but as a layered, discontinuous, and elusive process of cultural exchange." Dobie, "Translation in the Contact Zone," 29.
56. Paul Sebag, "Introduction," in Francois Pétis de la Croix, *Les Mille et un jours* (Paris: Éditions Phébus, 2003), 16 and 30.
57. Ibid., 17–18.

58. Hahn, *François Pétis de la Croix,* 34.
59. For more on the importance of the Oriental tale and its distinguishing features from regular fairy tales see Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the* Novel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Aravamudan argues that the Oriental tale is important to the history of the novel and nationalism.
60. Hahn, *François Pétis de la Croix,* 35.
61. Ibid. Antoine Galland also sold his work as a guide to the Oriental world. The *Journal des Savants* took Galland's first volume in 1704 as a window into understanding Oriental culture, and Montesquieu also referred to the *Mille et un Nuits* as a source on the Orient in his *Pensées.* See Hahn, *François Pétis de la Croix,* 34–36, and Marie-Louise Dufrenoy, *L'Orient romanesque en France, 1704–1789* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1946–75), I:149–50.
62. On the issue of Galland's misrepresentation and his compilation of the text, see the articles in Makdisi and Felicity, eds., *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context*, and Muhsin Mahdi, ed., *The Thousand and One Nights*, 3 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984–94).
63. François Pétis de la Croix, *Mille et un jours* (Paris: Éditions Phébus, 2003), 49.
64. Ibid., 52.
65. See Jean Chardin, *Voyages de Chevalier Chardin, en Perse et autres lieues de l'orient* (Amsterdam: Chez Jean Louis de Lorme, 1711), III:214.
66. Pétis de la Croix, *Mille et un jours*, 22–23.
67. Ibid.
68. Paul Sebag explains Pétis de la Croix's sources in "Introduction," 22–24.
69. See Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book That Changed Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 259–61 for more on Sufism, the Enlightenment, and the ideas of Jean-Frédéric Bernard, who also compared Quietism and Sufism.
70. Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 161–62.
71. See Durry Efendi, *Relations de Dourry Effendi ambassadeur de la porte othomane auprès du roi de Perse* (Paris: Ferra, 1810).
72. Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 120–21.
73. *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peoples du monde . . .,* 7 vols. (Amsterdam: J.F. Bernard, 1733–39). The first English edition is *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World . . .*, 7 vols. (London: William Jackson and Claude Dubosc, 1733–39). Hunt, Jacob, and Mijnhardt, *The Book That Changed Europe*, 261.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., 24–26.
76. Pétis de la Croix, *Mille et un jours*, 61.
77. Ibid., 147.
78. To read about the concept of the theater-state, see Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).
79. For a discussion on the differences between Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid courts and their European counterparts, see Gülru Necipoglu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–42. According to Necipoglu, "Safavid court ceremonial shared an affinity with that practiced by the French kings in its emphasis on the accessible image of the ruler who readily appeared in public on every possible occasion. Instead of remaining hidden to make himself worthy of respect, the Safavid shah manifested his royal power through constant visibility, spectacle, and display." Also see Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi`ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).
80. See, for example, Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671), 248. Chardin describes the king's public appearances repeatedly during his description of Soleiman III's coronation.
81. Deslandes, *Les Beautez de la Perse*, 24–28.

82. Ibid., 177.
83. Duc de Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, ed. and trans. Lucy Norton (London: Prion Books, 1968), 405.
84. Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
85. Ibid., 100.
86. Ibid.
87. Louise Robbins, *Elephants, Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
88. Ibid., 59.
89. Ibid., 177.
90. Ibid., 180–88.
91. On the question of whether Louis XIV himself requested the painting, see Daniel Posner, "Charles Lebrun's Triumphs of Alexander," *The Art Bulletin* 41, no. 3 (September 1959): 237–48, and Chantal Grell and Christian Michel, *L'Ecole des princes, ou, Alexandre disgracié: essai sur la mythologie monarchique de la France absolutiste*, introduction by Pierre Vidal-Naquet (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988).
92. Grell and Michel, *L'Ecole des princes*, 38.
93. Ibid., 55–56.
94. Ibid., 59.
95. Ibid., 59–60.
96. Louis Marchesano and Christian Michel, *Printing the Grand Manner: Charles Le Brun and Monumental Prints in the Age of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 11.
97. André Félibien, *Recueil de descriptions de peintures et d'autres ouvrages faits pour le Roy* (Paris: S. Mabre-Cramoisy, 1689), 30.
98. Ibid. For more on the painting, see Posner, "Charles Lebrun's Triumphs of Alexander," 237–48.
99. Pierre Corneille, *Cinna ou la clémence d'Auguste* (Paris: Hachette, 1862).
100. Marchesano and Michel, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 23.
101. Ibid., 24.
102. Ibid., 25–26.
103. Norman Bryson argues that Le Brun's method is "discursive not figurative," for it "upheld the centralizing power of the text." Norman Bryson, *Word and Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 31–34.
104. Ibid., 53–54. Jennifer Montagu points out that Le Brun's use of "a shallow stage and the simple double line of figures to enable their reactions to be "read" like so many words in a narrative." Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 42.
105. Marchesano and Michel, *Printing the Grand Manner*, 15–19, 60.
106. Ibid., 20. Marchesano and Michel point out, "Because of Edelinck's engraving, seemingly the most popular of the suite, and the most numerous versions of it made after Le Brun's death, Le Brun's 'Queens of Persia' held its space as a model of narrative painting in which the drama of the story was clearly articulated through the expressions and gestures of each figure."
107. Ibid., 60.
108. A *ruelle* means a narrow lane or street; here it referred to the space in a room between the bed and the wall where visitors could gather. See Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*, 29.
109. Ibid., xii.
110. Faith Beasley, *Salons, History, and the Creation of Seventeenth-Century France:* Mastering Memory (New York: Ashgate, 2006). Both Craveri and Beasley have placed women as "inventors" of a national French culture.
111. Quoted in Grell and Michel, *L'Ecole des princes*, 144.
112. Félibien, *Recueil de descriptions de peintures,* 37.
113. Ibid., 64.
114. Ibid., 38.
115. Ibid.

116. Ibid., 33–39.
117. Ibid., 39–40.
118. Ibid., 41.
119. Ibid., 45.
120. Ibid., 45–46.
121. Ibid., 46.
122. Ibid., 46.
123. Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 94. Norman references Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime: A History of France, 1600–1774*, trans. M. Greengrass (London: Blackwell, 1991), 128, who writes that Louis XIV's early reign "presented a kind of enlightened despot before the astonished eyes of the rest of Europe." Robin Briggs also discusses the early reign in these terms, in *Early Modern France 1560–1715* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
124. See Beasley, *Salons*, 76–80. Beasley further shows how the Academy did not just usurp the place of the women but redefined itself as the creator of the French tastes, erasing the contribution of the seventeenth-century women.
125. Ibid., 78.
126. Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 50–51.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid., 46–49.
130. Grell and Michel, *L'Ecole des princes*, 68.
131. For more on the quarrel between "the ancients" and "the moderns," see Joan DeJean, *Ancients Against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
132. Félibien, *Recueil de descriptions de peintures*, 66. Also see Grell and Michel, *L'Ecole des princes,* 115.

## *Chapter 3*

1. See Pierre-Victor Michel, *Mémoires du sieur Michel sur le voyage qu'il a faict en Perse dans les années 1706–1709*, BNF, ms fr. 7200. Michel's descriptions of his diplomatic quest for an official treaty between France and Persia, recorded in his 250-page manuscript memoir, has been subject to little analysis in a span of over fifty years. Historians of the Safavid dynasty and Persian-French relations, such as Laurence Lockhart and Ann Kroell, have referred to Michel's work but only for its narrative of Persian-French relations. Laurence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); Anne Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate* (Paris: Société de l'Orient, 1977), 29–41. For a recent brief summary of Fabre and Michel's mission and French relations with Persia, see Jean Calmard, "The French Presence in Safavid Persia: A Preliminary Study," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 312. For another brief account of Michel's mission, see Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 121–22. Scholars have used Michel's writings to shed light on the curious figure of Marie Petit. See Laurence Lockhart, "Marie Petit's Persian Adventure," *The Asiatic Review* (1946): 273–77; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*; Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 29–41. More recently, Katherine Macdonald, Matthew Lauzon, and Junko Takeda have discussed Marie Petit as a female diplomatic player and her involvement in efforts of French entrepreneurs to capture the silk trade. See Katherine Macdonald, "Marie Petit's Persian (1705–1708): The Eastward Travels of a French 'Concubine,'" in *Prostitution and Eighteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Ann Marie Lewis and Markman Ellis (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 59–70; Matthew Lauzon, "'In the

Name of the Princesses of France': Marie Petit and the 1706 French Diplomatic Mission to Safavid Iran," *Journal of World History* 25, nos. 2–3 (2014): 341–71; Junko Takeda, "The Princesses' Representative or Renegade Entrepreneur? Marie Petit, the Silk Trade, and Franco-Persian Diplomacy," in *Colonization, Piracy, and Trade in Early Modern Europe: The Roles of Powerful Women and Queens*, ed. Estelle Paranque, Nate Probasco, and Claire Jowitt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

2. In addition to Michel's own account of the embassy, other sources that add to Michel's relation of his embassy are letters from the French consul in the Ottoman Empire to France and sources about the trial of Marie Petit that occurred upon her reentry into France. See Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vols. 2–4; Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Turquie, vol. 43–45; Archives Nationales, AE B1 379–84; Archives Nationales, Marine B7.
3. Of late, the use of Persian-French diplomatic sources by European and French historians has expanded, albeit narrowly, demonstrated by Ann Marie Touzard's use of diplomatic sources to understand the role of the translator Padery in French diplomacy. Specialists of Persia have begun to investigate diplomatic encounters between Europe and Persia. Rudi Matthee, for instance, has probed the diplomatic confrontations between the Dutch and Persians. Yet diplomatic encounters between France and the Safavid Empire merit continued investigation. Some examples are Anne-Marie Touzard, *Le Drogman Padery: émissaire de France en Perse 1719–1725* (Paris: Société Nouvelle Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 2005) and Rudi Matthee, "Negotiating Across Cultures: The Dutch Van Leene Mission to the Court of Shah Sulayman, 1689–92," *Eurasian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2004): 35–63.
4. See B. Köpeczi, *La France et la Hongrie au début du XVIIIe siécle* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó,1971). See Michel, *Mémoires*, 1.
5. For some examples of studies on early modern diplomatic contacts between Asia and Europe that focus on problems of cultural exchange, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam's discussion of East-West confrontation in *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); John F. Wills Jr., *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666–1687* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); and Ronald S. Love, "Rituals of Majesty: France, Siam, and Court Spectacle in Royal Image-Building at Versailles in 1685 and 1686," *Canadian Journal of History* 31, no. 2 (August 1996): 171–97. Also see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
6. Michel, *Mémoires*, 1.
7. Ibid.
8. Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 1–2. Also see the introduction to Touzard, *Le Drogman Padery*.
9. See Calmard, "The French Presence in Safavid Persia," 5.
10. For a summary of French missions to Persia, see ibid., 309–15.
11. Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 26–27.
12. Ibid., 26–29.
13. Louis Robin, a surgeon, also accompanied Fabre and, according to Lockhart, recorded the mission in a lost document. Lockhart lists Jacob Rousseau as another member of the entourage. Jacob Rousseau was a cousin of the Enlightenment author Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 438.
14. Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 29. Marie repeatedly claimed she lent Fabre money to fund his mission to Persia in the *Mémoire pour servir instruction au* process found in the Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vol. 2, ff. 235–94.
15. Michel, Mémoires, 1–3; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 437–39.
16. On the governors in Erivan, see Mirza Naqi Nasiri, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran: A Third Manual of Safavid Administration*, trans. and ed. Mirza Naqi Nasiri (Washington, DC: Mage, 2008).
17. Michel, *Mémoires*, 3. Lockhart also discusses this allowance in *The Fall of the Safavid Dynasty*, 439.

18. For the details of Fabre and Petit's voyage through the Ottoman Empire and the hurdles the mission faced, see Archives Étrangères, Correspondance Politique, Turquie 43, ff. 95–96; Archives Nationales de France, MAR/b/7/73. Also see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 437–39. Takeda provides a detailed account of the trip through the Ottoman Empire in "The Princesses' Representative or Renegade Entrepreneur?," 141–42.
19. Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 29. See the fictional work based on Marie Petit's own memoirs by Maulde de la Clavière, *Les Mille et une nuits d'une ambassadrice de Louis XIV* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1896). For more on Marie Petit in Persia and her subsequent trial in France, see Macdonald, "Marie Petit's Persian Adventure," 59–70.
20. Charles, Comte de Ferriol, Baron d'Argental served as the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1699 to 1711. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Savafi Empire*, 437.
21. Michel, *Mémoires*, 3–6, 12–13. Katherine Macdonald, in "Marie Petit's Persian Adventure," suggests that Marie Petit was branded a "whore" because she posed a threat to male authorities such as Michel.
22. Michel, *Mémoires*, 3–7; Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vol. 2, ff. 255, 279–94. Lockhart provides a good version of events in *The Fall of the Savafi Empire*, 437–44. Some examples of other scholars who describe this incident are Macdonald, "Marie Petit's Persian Adventure"; Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids*; and Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*.
23. See Michel, *Mémoires*, 3–7; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Savafi Empire*, 437–44.
24. Marie Petit was arrested upon her arrival in Marseilles. For an account of her prosecution, see Macdonald, "Marie Petit's Persian Adventure."
25. Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vol. 2, f. 236.
26. See Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).
27. The emphasis on the important role women played is largely due to the breakdown of the divide between the public and private spheres. Scholars have shown that the institution of the court and dynastic politics provided women with formidable political roles in the early modern period. For a recent overview of the literature concerning women and diplomacy in Europe, see Carolyn James and Glenda Sluga, "Introduction: The Long International History of Women and Diplomacy," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–12.
28. Corina Bastian, "'Paper Negotiations': Women and Diplomacy in the Early Eighteenth Century," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (London: Routledge, 2016), 107–19.
29. Garrett Mattingly discussed the development of a professionalized diplomatic system in Renaissance Italy that was male-dominated. See Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008). Scholars have shown that diplomats were not necessarily professionals and have emphasized the role of informal elements, such as family networks, in their selection and duties. See, for example, Isabella Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350–1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Daniela Frigo, "'Small States' and Diplomacy: Mantua and Modena," in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800*, ed. Daniela Frigo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For a brief and good overview of the revisionist literature concerning Renaissance Italy, see Carolyn James, "Women and Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics Since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (London: Routledge, 2016), 13–29.
30. See Lauzon, "In the Name of the Princesses of France," 344.
31. Quoted in Florian Kühnel, "'Minister-like Cleverness, Understanding, and Influence on Affairs': Ambassadresses in Everyday Business and Courtly Ceremonies at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1400–1800*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (London: Routledge, 2017), 130–46. See Abraham de Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, 3 vols. (Cologne: P. Marteau, 1690), and the

English translation from which this quote is taken, Abraham de Wicquefort, *The embassador and his functions*, trans. Mr. Digby (London, 1716), 5. To read more about Abraham de Wicquefort and his impact on diplomacy, see Maurice Keens- Soper, "Abraham de Wicquefort and Diplomatic Theory," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 8, no. 2 (July 1997): 16–30.

On Bodin, see Clandia Opitz, "Female Sovereignty and the Subordination of Women in the Works of Martin Luther, Jean Calvin and Jean Bodin," in *Encyclopedia, Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*, ed. Christine Fauré (New York: Routledge, 2003), 19–21.

32. François de Callières, *On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes: On the Uses of Diplomacy, the choice of minister and envoys, and the personal qualities necessary for success in missions abroad*, trans. A. F. Whyte (Paris: M. Brunet, 1716), 16–23.
33. See Lauzon, "In the Name of the Princesses of France," 348–52.
34. See ibid., 341–71; Takeda, "The Princesses' Representative."
35. Lauzon, "In the Name of the Princesses of France," 341–71.
36. For more on the Armenian division, see Kristine Kostikyan, "European Catholic Missionary Propaganda Among the Armenian Population of Safavid Iran," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 371–78. Also see Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver: The Eurasion Trade of the Julfa Armenians in Safavid Iran and India 1530–1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 327–47, and Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 195.
37. For more on Ferriol's position concerning religious affairs, see Lauzon, "In the Name of the Princesses of France," 364.
38. Michel, *Mémoires*, 7–8.
39. Francis Richard, *Raphaël du Mans missionaire en Perse au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1995), I:17; Alastair Hamilton and Francis Richard, *André du Ryer and Oriental Studies in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 78.
40. Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671), 167–209.
41. Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 200.
42. Michel, *Mémoires*, 3–4.
43. Ibid., 3. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 430, notes that Pidou de Saint Olon held consular authority. Also see *A Chronicle of the Carmelites* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939), vol. 1.
44. For more on Imam Quli Beg, see Roberto Gulbenkian, "Philippe de Zagly, Marchand Arménien de Julfa et l'établissement du commerce Persan en Courlande en 1696," *Revue des études arméniennes* 7 (1970): 361–99; see also Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Empire*, 441.
45. Michel, *Mémoires*, 3.
46. Ibid., 14.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Michel refers to the city of Tabriz as "Tauris." The Capuchins arrived in Persia in 1628. Father Gabriel de Paris and Father Pacifique de Provins were the first to arrive. Shah Abbas I sent Pacificque de Provins to France to negotiate with France. See Charles Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453–1923* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 85–88 and Pacifique de Provins, *Relation du Voyage de Perse* (Paris: Nicolas et Jean de la Coste, 1631). Father Gabriel Chinon set up a Capuchin hospice in Tabriz in 1656. The convent in Tabriz survived until the mid-eighteenth century. See "Capuchins in Persia," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online); Gabriel de Chinon, *Relations nouvelles du Levant* . . . (Lyon: Librarie Jean Thioly, 1671).
50. Michel, *Mémoires*, 15.
51. Ibid., 16.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.

54. For a definition of Beglerbegi, see "Beglerbegi," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online).
55. Michel, *Mémoires*, 16–18.
56. Ibid., 17.
57. Ibid., 18.
58. Ibid.
59. To travel from France to Persia, the shortest route, across Turkey, was also the most dangerous one, as the Ottomans would see French contacts with Persia as a threat. Louis Deshayes de Cormenin, a French ambassador who traveled to Persia in 1626, went through Strasbourrg, sailed the Danube to Belgrade, then went by land to Sofia and on to Constantinople. Other travelers, such as Tavernier, went through Venice. Travelers could also take a sea route from Marseilles or Venice to Constantinople or Aleppo. However, pirates made this route dangerous as well. For more information on travel routes, see Anne-Marie Touzard, "French Travelers in Persia, 1600–1730," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online). Also see Sebouh Aslanian's discussion of communication and the delays in receiving letters in the Indian Ocean in his study on the flow of information among the Julfan merchant community, "'The Salt in a Merchant's Letter': The Culture of Julfan Correspondence in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean," *Journal of World History* 19, no. 2 (2008): 127–88.
60. Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, I:169.
61. Ibid.
62. Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, II:52.
63. Ibid., II:52–53.
64. For a description of the Ottoman embassy of 1669, see the following court memoirs: Nicolas de Sainctot, *Mémoires*, 2 vols., BNF, ms. fr. 14117; Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux, envoyé extraordinaire du Roy à la Porte, consul d'Alep, d'Alger, de Tripoli et autres Échelles du Levant: contenant ses voyages à Constantinople, dans l'Asie, la Syrie, la Palestine, l'Égypte et la Barbarie* (Paris: C.-J.-B. Delespine, 1735), vol. IV; and Nicolas-Louis Le Dran, "Mémoire sur le cérémonial observé en France en 1669 à l'egard de L'Aga Soliman envoyé par le Grand Seigneur mahomet IV vers le Roy Louis XIV, fait et remis à l'Archeveque de Cambrai le 20 novembre 1720," Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Mémoires et Documents, Turquie, vol. 10, doc. 4, f. 56. Also see "Mémoire du Roy pour server d'instruction au sieur de nointel, allant ambassadeurs à Constantinople," in *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministers de France*, ed. Pierre Duparc, vol. 29: Turquie (Paris: CNRS, 1969), 50–51. For an analysis of the visit and its impact on French identity, see Julia Anne Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey: The Impact of Turkey on the Construction of French Identity, 1660–1789," Ph.D. diss., Graduate School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2001, 29.
65. In the Ottoman Empire, the *muteferrika* was a special corps made up of the sons and brothers of the highest-ranking officials in palace service. They performed the outside service for the palace, which included positions such as palace gatekeepers, officers of the stables, messengers for the sultan, and envoys to outside provinces or to foreign countries. See I. Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), The office of *muteferrika* was described in French sources. Yet these French texts were unclear on the prestige of the office in the Ottoman Empire. Further, the French court did not understand what would correspond to it in the French hierarchical system. Nicolas Le Dran and Charles, Comte de Ferriol both described the office of *muteferrika*. See Nicolas-Louis Le Dran, "Memoires sur le ceremonial observe en France en 1669," Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Mémoires et Documents, vol. 10, and Charles, Comte de Ferriol, "Abrégé de l'état présent de l'Empire ottoman, 1710," Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Mémoires et Documents, Turquie, vol. 10. Also see Julia Landweber, who cites both Le Dran and the Comte de Ferriol. However, she does not compare the French idea of *muteferrika* with the actual rank it held in the Ottoman Empire; she concludes it was a lowly rank and Suleiman Aga was wrong to call himself an ambassador, referring to it as his "first error." See Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 29–31.

66. See Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 29, and Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Mémoires et Documents, Turquie, vol. 10.
67. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:92.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., 93–94.
70. Ibid., 94.
71. Ibid., 95.
72. Laurent d'Arvieux recounts how Louis XIV requested the comedie-ballet to make fun of the Turkish envoy; *Mémoires*, IV:252–53. To read more about the link between the embassy of Suleiman Aga and *Le Bourgeouis Gentilhomme*, see Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 52–61; Albert Vandal, "Molière et le cérémonial turc à la cour de Louis XIV," *Revue d'art dramatique* 11 (1888): 65–80; C. D. Rouillard, "Background of the Turkish Ceremony in Moliere's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 39 (1969): 33–52.
73. See Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Act III, scene xiv. Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 52–53.
74. Laurent d'Arvieux, who had traveled extensively in the Ottoman Empire and served the court as a source of information on Ottoman customs, wrote, "It seemed to me that we would have saved considerable embarrassment if, instead of arguing over his rank, we just received him and treated him like an ambassador. It would not have cost us anything more, we would have saved on expenses, and we would have given Suleiman an overall better send-off. Further, he highlighted the futility of the French obsession with discovering Suleiman's rank by noting that the Ottomans used the same word, *elchi*, to denote "ambassador" and "envoy," and there was no difference between the two. D'Arvieux, *Mémoires,* IV:152.
75. Jean Chardin, *Voyages de Monsieur le chevalier Chardin et autres lieux de l'Orient* (Amsterdam: Jean Louis de Lorme, 1711), I:239, 250.
76. See Michele Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145; Daren Hodson, "A Would-Be Turk: Louis XIV in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 32, no. 1 (2010): 93, 101; Ellen Welch, "The Specter of the Turk in Early Modern French Court Entertainments," *L'Esprit Créateur* 53, no. 4 (2013): 84–97 and Ellen Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 168–69.
77. See Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions,* I:169.
78. Franck Birkenholz, "Merchant-Kings and Lords of the World: Diplomatic Gift-Exchange Between the Dutch East India Company and the Safavid and Mughal Empires in the Seventeenth Century," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (London: Routledge, 2017), 223.
79. Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vol. 2, f. 236.
80. See the writings of the Baron de Breteuil and Nicolas de Sainctot for examples of embassies with entourages, parades, and presents.
81. Europeans entered Isfahan with large entourages to impress the Safavids. For example, on the entourage of Joan Cunaeus, in 1651, see Birkenholz, "Merchant-Kings and Lords of the World," 225.
82. On diplomatic presents in Safavid Iran, see Matthee, "Negotiating Across Cultures," 38.
83. See Baron de Breteuil on the Persian embassy of 1715. For the propaganda of the visit, see *Gazette de France*, February–March 1715; Lefèvre de Fontenay, *Journal historique du voyage et des avantures singulieres de l'ambassadeur de Perse, en France, février et mars 1715* (Paris: D. Jollet & J. la Mesle, 1715); *Journal de Verdun*, February 1715–June 1715; Engravings, BNF, Cabinet des Estampes, Collection Hennin and QB1.
84. Michel, *Mémoires*, 19–22.
85. Ibid., 28–29.
86. On late Safavid bribery and corruption, see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis,* 197–241.
87. Michel, *Mémoires*, 28.

88. Ibid., 29, 111–14.
89. Michel continued his accusations against Petit after their arrival in France, where Petit was put on trial. Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vol. 2.
90. See, for example, articles in D. Fairchild Ruggles, ed., *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) and Gavin R. G. Hambly, ed., *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
91. Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
92. Kathryn Babayan, "The Aqa'id Al-Nisa: A Glimpse at Safavid Women in Local Isfahani Cuture," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin R. G. Hambly (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
93. On Pari Khan Khanum, see Shohreh Gholsorkhi, "Pari Khan Khanum: A Masterful Safavid Princess," *Iranian Studies* 28, nos. 3–4 (1995): 143–56.
94. Babayan, "The Aqa'id Al-Nisa," 358.
95. Matthee, *Persia in Crisis,* 203–4.
96. Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vol. 2, f. 259.
97. Archives Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Perse, vol. 2, f. 282; Lockhart, *Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 443.
98. See Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History* (New York: Anchor, 2008). On Lady Montagu, see Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Kühnel, "Minister-Like Cleverness," 130–46.
99. Lockhart, *Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 444.
100. For more on the relationship between Marie Petit and Vakhtang IV, see Takeda, "The Princesses' Representative," 155–57.
101. See Michel, *Mémoires*, 68–77. One concession was the beheading of Imam Quli Beg, which was to make amends for the governor's harsh treatment of the French mission after Fabre's death, This was seen as a victory by French missionaries and Charles de Ferriol in the Ottoman Empire, who disliked Imam Quli Beg. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 444; Lauzon, "In the Name of the Princesses of France," 368. Michel reports that Jérome de Pontchartrain, secretary of state for the navy and commerce, was not pleased by the beheading of the Armenian. Michel, *Mémoires*, 213.
102. Michel, *Mémoires*, 107.
103. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 445.
104. Michel, *Mémoires*, 116.
105. Ibid., 117.
106. See Gülru Necipoglu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–42 and Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).
107. Quoted in Rudi Matthee, "Negotiating Across Cultures," 48.
108. Michel, *Mémoires*, 122.
109. Ibid.
110. To read about the concept of the theater-state, see Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). On Louis XIV, see Norbert Elias, The Court Society, trans. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
111. Michel, *Mémoires*, 134. Michel refers to this minister as the "Attamadoulet"; Lockhart, in *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 447, calls him "I'timad al-Daula."
112. Michel, *Mémoires*, 134.
113. Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 78–90.
114. Matthee, "Negotiating Across Cultures," 46.
115. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, 212.

116. Michel, *Mémoires*, 30.
117. Ibid.
118. For more on Safavid political approaches to Europeans, see Matthee, *Persia in Crisis,* 130–37. Also see Calmard, "The French Presence in Safavid Persia," 312.
119. See Savory, *The Safavids*, 114–18.
120. Michel, *Mémoires*, 144.
121. Ibid., 148–49.
122. Ibid., 136.
123. Ibid., 152.
124. Ibid., 153.
125. Ibid., 173.

## *Chapter 4*

1. Here I use the spelling "Mohammad Reza Beg," but "Mehemet Riza Beg" is the spelling used in all contemporary French sources.
2. French courtiers and journals labeled a vast geographic area from Siam to Morocco to Muscovy under the category of "Orient," although those places were geographically and culturally distinct.
3. Ellen Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), ch. 6.
4. Several *introducteurs*, such as Anne de Brulon, Nicolas de Berlize, the Baron de Breteuil, and Dufort de Cheverny, wrote memoirs that described their court duties. See Jean-Nicolas Dufort de Cheverny, *Mémoires sur les règnes de Louis XV et Louis XVI et sur la Révolution*, ed. Robert de Crèvecoeur (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1886); Anne de Brulon and Nicolas de Brulon, *Réception des ambassadeurs*, BNF ms. fr. 18520; Baron de Breteuil, *Mémoires*, ed. Evelyne Lever (Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1992), 43. Breteuil began writing his memoirs in January 1699, when he took the post of *introducteur des ambassadeurs*, and continued to write until the death of Louis XIV in September 1715. He recorded every detail of the ambassadorial visits and spectacles in Paris and Versailles he planned during his tenure, including both those from the Orient and those from Europe. His journal, consisting of 2,600 pages of manuscripts in seven volumes, was never published.
5. See Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983). Elias's work is still the basis for anyone studying the rituals of court life. Also see Jean Marie Apostolides, *Le Roi-machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1981). Thanks to the Iowa school of French historiography we know a great deal about some of the rituals—funeral, coronation, and *lit de justice*—that shaped the French monarchy. However, historians have neglected the ceremony of diplomatic visits.
6. See Dufort de Cheverny, *Mémoires*; Brulon and Brulon, *Réception des ambassadeurs*; Breteuil, *Mémoires*.
7. Nicolas de Sainctot, *Mémoires*, 2 vols., BNF ms. fr.14117. Nicolas de Sainctot bought the post for 50,000 écus in 1691. Upon his death in 1709, the position passed to his son, the Chevalier de Sainctot, who held it until 1752. See *Les Introducteurs des ambassadeurs* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1901), 51–52.
8. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, I:A.
9. For more about the Moroccan diplomatic visit to France in 1699, see Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003), 197–214.
10. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:187.
11. See Lucien Bely, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Librarie Arthème Fayard, 1990).
12. William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach," *Journal of Modern History* 52, no. 3 (1980): 452–76.

13. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:D.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., I:533–1177.
16. Ibid., I:533.
17. Ibid., I:533–1177.
18. Ibid., I:616–17.
19. Ibid., I:592.
20. *Les Introducteurs des ambassadeurs*, 13.
21. Ibid., 14–17.
22. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, I.
23. Ibid., I:782–83.
24. Ibid., I:784.
25. The catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France lists seven different French editions of Abraham de Wicquefort's classic, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, in the years 1680–81, 1689–90, 1690, 1715, 1724, 1730, and 1770. Abraham de Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, 3 vols. (Cologne: P. Marteau, 1690). For more about Abraham de Wicquefort and his impact on diplomacy, see Maurice Keens-Soper, "Abraham de Wicquefort and Diplomatic Theory," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 8, no. 2 (1997): 16–30.
26. Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, I:169.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 12–16.
29. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 87–89.
30. Ibid., 93.
31. Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy*, 131–45.
32. *Mercure galant*, May 1689, 275–76.
33. *Mercure galant*, January 1699, 250.
34. *Mercure galant*, 1672, I:273–74.
35. *Mercure galant*, 1673, III:15–20.
36. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, I:725.
37. Ibid., I:732–33.
38. Ibid.
39. Béatrix Saule, "*La Galerie au temps de Louis XIV de l'ordinaire à l'extraordinaire*," in *La Galerie des Glaces: Histoire et Restauration*, ed. Jeanne Faton et al. (Dijon: Éditions Faton, 2007), 54–73.
40. François Souchal, *French Sculptors of the 17th and 18th Centuries: The Reign of Louis XIV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
41. *Mercure galant*, May 1685, 289–338. Also see Stephane Castelluccio, *Les Fastes de la Galerie des Glaces: Recueil d'articles du Mercure galant (1681–1773)* (Paris: Payot, 2007), 109–13.
42. *Mercure galant*, May 1685, 289–338.
43. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:88.
44. Ibid., II:137.
45. Ibid., II:143.
46. Castelluccio, *Les Fastes de la Galerie des Glaces*, 18.
47. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:127.
48. Ibid., II:130.
49. Ibid., II:131.
50. *Mercure galant*, January 1682, 309–11.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:180.
54. Ibid., II:127.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., II:128.
57. Ibid., II:183.

58. Ibid., II:177.
59. See Julia Anne Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey: The Impact of Turkey on the Construction of French Identity, 1660–1789," Ph.D. diss., Graduate School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2001, 29, and Nicolas-Louis Le Dran, "Mémoire sur le cérémonial observé en France en 1669 à l'egard de L'Aga Soliman envoyé par le Grand Seigneur mahomet IV vers le Roy Louis XIV, fait et remis à l'Archeveque de Cambrai le 20 novembre 1720," Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Mémoires et Documents, Turquie, vol. 10, doc. 4, f. 56.
60. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 63.
61. Louis de Rouvroy, Duc de Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, ed. and trans. Lucy Norton (London: Prion Books, 1968), 405.
62. Ibid.
63. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 136.
64. Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy*, 176–81.
65. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:83.
66. Ibid., II:91.
67. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 57.
68. Laurent d'Arvieux had traveled extensively through the Ottoman Empire and acted as the court informer on Ottoman protocol during Suleiman Aga's visit and afterward. Quoted from Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux, envoyé extraordinaire du Roy à la Porte, consul d'Alep, d'Alger, de Tripoli et autres Échelles du Levant: contenant ses voyages à Constantinople, dans l'Asie, la Syrie, la Palestine, l'Égypte et la Barbarie* (Paris: C.-J.-B. Delespine, 1735), IV:130. Also see Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 34, esp. n. 38.
69. Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires*, IV, 134–35. For further descriptions also see "Lettre de M. de Lyonne au Roy Louis XIV, 3 novembre 1669," Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Mémoires et Documents, Turquie, vol. 10, which is also quoted in Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 35–37.
70. Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires*, IV:151.
71. See Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 388–89.
72. Ronald Love suggests that the Siamese were unique in their treatment, as they were the only foreign dignitaries to be so elaborately hosted in the Hall of Mirrors. Ronald S. Love, "Rituals of Majesty: France, Siam, and Court Spectacle in Royal Image-Building at Versailles in 1685 and 1686," *Canadian Journal of History* 31, no. 2 (August 1996): 171–97. However, the Persian ambassador was equally honored in the Hall of Mirrors in 1715.
73. Ibid.
74. "L'Estrade et le trône dressé à l'extrémité de la Galerie des Glaces pour la réception de l'ambassadeur de Siam, le 1er septembre 1686," engraving by Dolivar, *Mercure galant*, September 1686, 2e partie.
75. See Love, "Rituals of Majesty," and Van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam*. Nicolas de Sainctot also describes the reception of the Siamese, revealing elements of imitation; *Mémoires*, II:144.
76. Love, "Rituals of Majesty," 171–97.
77. Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:44.
78. Ibid., II:51.
79. Ibid., II:184.
80. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 136.
81. Ibid., 63.
82. Ibid., 111. Ellen Welch notes that the French perception of Muscovites changed as they began to publicly show greater appreciation for Western culture. Over time, the French recognized them as more civil. See Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy*, 169–70. For more on Russia's place in early modern diplomacy, see Jan Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and Culture of Diplomacy, 1648–1725* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
83. Breteuil, *Mémoires*,111.

84. In the end, Breteuil determined not to give the ambassador the presents out of fear that the ambassador would interpret the act ungraciously and argue that he didn't receive this treatment upon his arrival from France.
85. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 106.
86. Treaties or negotiations between "Oriental" countries and France usually arose outside of France. For example, French diplomats stationed in the Ottoman Empire conducted commercial and political business with the Ottomans. For a general account of European and French negotiations in the Ottoman Empire, see Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (New York: Berg, 2008).
87. Anne Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate* (Paris: Société d'Histoire de l'Orient, 1977), 37–38.
88. Ibid., 43; Laurence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 454.
89. Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate*, 53.
90. Ibid., 48–49. The correspondence between Richard and Pontchartrain and the Khan of Erivan and Torcy can be found at Affaires Étrangères, Correspondence Politique, Perse, vol. 3. For more on the political role of the khan of Erivan, Mohammad Qoli Khan, see Vladimir Minorsky, *Tadhkirat al-Muluk: A Manual of Safavid Administration* (London: Luzac, 1943). On the Marquis de Torcy's role in Louis XIV's government, see John C. Rule and Ben S. Trotter, *A World of Paper: Louis XIV, Colbert de Torcy, and the Rise of the Information State* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).
91. The visit of three Siamese ambassadors in 1686 also generated great excitement and curiosity, which Louis XIV used to his advantage. For example, Sainctot cites the French king's reputation for military victories as a reason for the Siamese embassy. For more on the Siamese embassies to France and the French relationship with Siam in the 1680s, see Van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam*, 388–89, and Love, "Rituals of Majesty."
92. The *petit-lever* was the ceremony of the waking of the king, a prestigious event at court. Norbert Elias analyses the *petit-lever* in *The Court Society*.
93. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 10–11.
94. See Elias, *The Court Society*. Also see Apostolides, *Le Roi-machine*, and Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
95. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 61.
96. See François de Callières, *L'Art de négocier sous Louis XIV* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2006).
97. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 107. See Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa, *L'Ambassade de D. Garcias de Silva Figueroa en Perse, contenant la politique de ce grand Empire, les moeurs du roy schach Abbas et une relation exacte de tous les lieux de Perse et des Indes où cet ambassadeur a esté l'espace de huit années qu'il y a demeuré,* trans. M. de Wicquefort (Paris: Chez Louis Billaine, 1667), and Jean Chardin, *Voyage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes Orientales par la Mer Noire & par la Colchide* (London: Moses Pitt, 1686).
98. Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et la Mascate*, 43. Breteuil corresponded with Gaudereau. See Affaires Étrangères, Correspondence politique, Perse, vol. 3, ff. 386a–389a. For more on the interpreter Padery, see Anne-Marie Touzard, *Le Drogman Padery: émissaire de France en Perse (1719–1725)* (Paris: Société Nouvelle Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 2005).
99. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 43.
100. Ibid., 101. François Pidou de Saint Olon wrote about his experience in Morocco. See François Pidou de Saint Olon, *État present de l'empire de Maroc* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2002).
101. Touzard, *Le Drogman Padery*, 91. Also see Archives Nationales, AE-B/III/139, f. 193v, Arnoul à Pontchartrain, Marseille, 26 octobre 1714.
102. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 102.
103. Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, XI:31–62.

104. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 103.
105. Ibid., 101.
106. Ibid., 120–21.
107. Ibid., 121–22.
108. Ibid., 113.
109. Ibid., 114.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid., 114–15.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid., 115.
118. Ibid., 114–15.
119. Ibid., 115.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid., 116.
124. Ibid., 121.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid., 107.
127. Ibid., 121.
128. Ibid.
129. The Duc de Saint-Simon, who was present at the Beg's reception, described the king's outfit in much greater detail than the *introducteur*. "He wore a coat of black and gold cloth, with the Order outside, and so did those few knights who usually wore it under their coats. His coat was trimmed with the finest diamonds of the crown jewels, to the tune of twelve and half million livres." Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, 405.
130. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 133. Breteuil writes (119, 126) that the magnificence of the men and women at the audience was executed with the utmost expense and *éclat* (ostentatious display) of the most magnificent court in the world.
131. Another clash between French and Ottoman diplomatic custom occurred over the *lettre de créance* during Suleiman Aga's audience with Louis XIV. The Turkish dignitary wished to hand the letter directly to the king. However, this conflicted with French protocol. See Sainctot, *Mémoires*, II:92.
132. Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, 404–5.
133. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 132.
134. Sanjay Subrahmanyam outlines the theories of cultural incommensurabilty in *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) and "Par-delà l'incommensurabilité: pour une histoire connectée des empires aux temps modernes," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 5, nos. 54–55 (2007): 34–53. Also see Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 180. For an example of an interpretation of encouters between Europe and other places in the globe that has emphasized cultural conflict instead of commensurability, see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: Perceiving the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).
135. Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
136. Pierre Goubert, *Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen*, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 223–31.

## *Chapter 5*

1. On the interest generated by foreign ambassadors, see, for example, Meredith Martin, "Ambassades extraordinaires et visiteurs des contrées lointaines," in *Visiteurs de Versailles: Voyageurs, Princes, Ambassadeurs 1682–1789*, ed. Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide et Bertrand Rondot (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), 138–49.
2. Most of the engravings of Mohammad Reza Beg, including the ones analyzed in this chapter, are listed in Blandine Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 100 (1982): 109–30.
3. On the consumer revolution in early modern Europe, see, for instance, John Brewer, Neil McKendrick, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), and Daniel Roche, *L'histoire des choses banales* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), published in English as *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France*, 1600–1800, trans. Brian Pearce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
4. See Marianne Grivel, *Le Commerce de l'estampe à Paris au XVIIe siècle* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1986).
5. Maxime Préaud, *Les Effets du soleil: almanachs du règne de Louis XIV* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées, 1995), 11–13.
6. For a discussion of French printing and almanacs, see Peter Fuhring, Louis Marchesano, Rémis Mathis, and Vanessa Selbach, eds., *A Kingdom of Images: French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV, 1660–1715* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2015). On almanac prints of the Siamese embassy, see Meredith Martin, "Mirror Reflections: Louis XIV, Phra Narai, and the Material Culture of Kingship," *Art History* 38, no. 4 (2015): 652–67.
7. Blandine Bouret cites one almanac print of the Persian embassy "Arrivée des Ambassadeurs de Perse à Marseille au mois de novembre 1714," B.N. Hennin, t. LXXXV, no 7490 and Qb1 1714. See Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image." On medals, see Mark Jones, *Medals of the Sun King* (London: British Museum, 1979).
8. Mark Jones, "The Medal as an Instrument of Propaganda in Late 17th and Early 18th Century Europe, Part 2," *Numismatic Chronicle* 183 (1983): 202–13.
9. Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image," 129.
10. Meredith Martin explains that engravings remained a "uniquely universal form of communication, one that could transcend geographical, cultural, and linguistic barriers and could 'speak equally everywhere to the eyes.'" Martin, "Mirror Reflections," 657.
11. Grivel, *Le Commerce de l'estampe*, 100.
12. On Colbert's patronage of the arts and sciences, see *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*, ed. P.Clément (Paris, 1861–82), V:233–650.
13. On the Cabinet du Roi, see A. Jammes, "Louis XIV sa bibliothèque, et le Cabinet du roi," *The Library*, 5th ser., 20 (1965): 1–12; Marianne Grivel, "Le Cabinet du Roi," *Revue de la Bibliothèque Nationale* XVIII (1985): 36–57; Anne Sauvy, "L'Illustration d'un règne: le Cabinet du roi et les projets encyclopédiques de Colbert," in *L'Art du livre à l'imprimerie nationale: 5 siècles de typographie*, ed. Raymond Blanchot et al. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1973), 102–27.
14. Grivel, "Le Cabinet du Roi," 36–57.
15. Ibid.
16. Baron de Breteuil, *Mémoires*, ed. Evelyne Lever (Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1992), 139.
17. Ibid., 138–39.
18. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 158.
19. Breteuil, *Mémoires,* 122–23. B. Naderzad points out that Louis XIV himself was intrigued by the exotic. He expected travelers to wear foreign costumes, encouraged their travel texts, and other foreign spectacles. See B. Naderzad, "Louis XIV, La Boullaye et l'exotisme Persan," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 89 (1972): 29–38.
20. Jean de Jullienne published one collection of engravings after Watteau's works in 1728 and another in 1736. On Watteau generally, see Donald Posner, *Antoine Watteau* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell

University Press, 1984). On Jean de Jullienne, see Isabelle Tillerot, *Jean de Jullienne et les collectionneurs de son temps* (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Editions, 2011). On Watteau's drawings of Persians, see Alicia Weisberg, "Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing in Eighteenth-Century France," Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2005.

21. The Siamese embassy has been well analyzed by historians and art historians alike. On the impact of the spectacle of the Siamese visit, for example, see Michael Smithies, Mission Made Impossible: The Second French Embassy to Siam, 1687 (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2002). On the French-Siamese relationship and the French ambassadorial visit to Siam in 1685, see Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam* (Paris: Fayard, 1991); Ronald Love, "Rituals of Majesty: France, Siam, and Court Spectacle in Royal Image Building at Versailles in 1685 and 1686," *Canadian Journal of History* 31 (August 1996): 171–98. On the impact of Siamese material culture, see Sarah Benson, "European Wonders at the Court of Siam," in *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Atlantic World*, ed. Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 155–76; Martin, "Mirror Reflections," 652–67; Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset, "Fashion Encounters: The 'Siamoise,' or the Impact of the Great Embassy on Textile Design in Paris in 1687," in *Global Textile Encounters*, ed. Marie-Louise Nosch, Zhao Feng, and Lotika Varadarajan (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 165–70. For images of the embassy and objects associated with it, see Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *Phra Narai, roi de Siam, et Louis XIV* (Paris: Musée de l'Orangerie, 1986) and Stèphane Castelluccio, *Les Fastes de la Galerie des Glaces: Recueil d'articles du Mercure galant* (Paris: Éditions Payot, 2007), 16–20.
22. See Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (New York: Berg, 2008), 163–256.
23. Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire de Furetière* (Rotterdam: Arnout et Reinier Leers, 1690), III, entry "Voyage." See also Michael Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters: Representing the Orient in 17th-Century French Travel Literature* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 11–l4.
24. See Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters*, 12, and Furetière, *Dictionnaire*, I, entry "Curiosité."
25. Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters*, 58–59; Furetière, *Dictionnaire*, I, entry "Curieux." In his dictionary entry on "Voyage," Furetière noted, "Les *voyages* sont les Romans des honnêtes gens." Furetière, Dictionnaire, III, entry "Voyage."
26. On collecting see Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500–1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
27. Jordan Goodman discusses how coffee, tea, and tobacco were appropriated by Europeans. See Goodman, "Excitantia; or, How Enlightenment Europe Took to Soft Drugs," in *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology*, ed. Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy, and Andrew Sherratt (London: Routledge, 1995), 127.
28. See Nicolas de Nicolay, *Dans l'empire de Soliman le Magnifique* ed. Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud and Stéphane Yérasimos (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1989) and Nicolas de Nicolay, *The nauigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie by Nicholas Nicholay*, trans. T. Washington the Younger (London: Thomas Dawson, 1585).
29. Ronald W. Ferrier, *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), xiii.
30. Adam Olearius, *Relation du voyage de Moscovie, Tartarie et de Perse, fait à l'occasion d'une ambassade envoyée au Grand-Duc de Moscovie et au Roy de Perse, par le Duc de Holstein, depuis l'an 1633, jusques en l'an 1639, traduite de l'allemand du sieur Olearius* (Paris: G. Clouzier, 1656). On Olearius, see Elio C. Brancaforte, *Visions of Persia: Mapping the Travels of Adam Olearius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
31. Cornelis de Bruyn, *Voyage au Levant, c'est-à-dire dans les principaux endroits de l'Asie Mineure, dans les isles de Chio, de Rhodes, de Chypre, etc., de même que dans les plus considérables villes d'Égypte, de Syrie et de la Terre Sainte . . . par Corneille Le Brun. Traduit du flamand* (Delft: H. de Kroonevelt, 1700).

32. The Bonnart costume prints are located at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.
33. "Le Roy et la Reine de Perse," anonymous, edited by Landry, 1715.
34. Blandine Bouret points out that the printers copied images of Shah Abbas; "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image," 29. Bouret uses the example of Schach-Abas, "Grand Spohy de Perse," edited by Jollain in 1660 and part of a book of costumes of Armenia, Arabia, Persia, and so on.
35. See "Portrait du roi Hossen de Perse," in *Voyages de Corneille Le Brun, par la Moscovie, en Perse et aux Indes orientales . . . On y a ajouté la route qu'a suivie Mr Isbrants, . . . en traversant la Russie et la Tartarie pour se rendre à la Chine . . .*, ed. Cornelis de Bruyn (Amsterdam: Frères Wetstein, 1718). For another portrayal of the monarch, see Thomas Herbert, *Relation du voyage de Perse et des Indes Orientales, traduite de l'anglois de Thomas Herbert [par Mr. de Wicquefort], avec les Révolutions arrivées au royaume de Siam, l'an 1647, traduites du flamand de Jérémie Van Vliet* (Paris: J. Du Puis, 1663).
36. Castelluccio, *Les Fastes de la Galerie des Glaces,* 9.
37. See Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671) and *Voyage du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes Orientales par la Mer Noire & par la Colchide* (London: Moses Pitt, 1686).
38. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 107.
39. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, En Perse, et Autres Lieux de l'Orient* (Paris: Jean Louis de Lorme, 1711), II:20.
40. Ibid., II:20.
41. Ibid., II:21.
42. Ibid., II:56.
43. Ibid., II:57.
44. These prints are produced by anonymous authors by different printers that, for the most part, seem to be located on the rue Saint-Jacques in Paris. In this case, the print of smoking is by Landry on the rue Saint-Jacques.
45. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 128.
46. Ibid.
47. *Journal historique sur les matières du tems [Journal de Verdun]*, February 1715, 334.
48. John Chardin, *Travels in Persia, 1673–1677* (New York: Dover, 1988), 146.
49. Rudi Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History 1500–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 115–30. See his discussion on the origins of tobacco and its rise in Safavid Iran in these pages. Concerning the European adoption of tobacco, see Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).
50. Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure,* 132.
51. De Bruyn's print is reproduced in Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure,* 133.
52. Duke de Saint Simon, *The Memoirs of the Duke of Saint Simon*, trans. Bayle St. John (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876), 83. "Monseigneur, upon retiring late to his own room, found them smoking with pipes, which they had sent for from the Swiss Guards! Knowing what would happen if the smell were discovered, he made them leave off, but the smoke had betrayed them. The King next day severely scolded them, at which the Princesse de Conti triumphed."
53. Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, 130; Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (London: Routledge, 1994). Also see Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*, 260–62.
54. On the debates on smoking, see Goodman, *Tobacco in History*; Heather Ashton and Rob Stepney, *Smoking: Psychology and Pharmacology* (London: Tavistock, 1982), 4.
55. *Journal de Verdun*, February 1715, 87.
56. Ibid.
57. Guerard, "Mehemet Riza Beg," Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.

58. See Julia Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey: The Impact of Turkey on the Construction of French Identity, 1660–1789," Ph.D. diss., Graduate School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2001, 31; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, trans. David Jacobson (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992); Alexandrine N. St. Clair, *The Image of a Turk in Europe* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973); Heinrich Jacob, *Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Viking Press, 1935); W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among French Working Class, 1789–1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
59. For examples of good recent discussions of coffee in France, see Emma Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670–1760* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 68; Julia Landweber, "'This Marvelous Bean': Adopting Coffee into Old Regime French Culture and Diet," *French Historical Studies* 38, no. 2 (2015): 193–223; McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*, 163–203.
60. Chardin, *Voyages* (1711), 66.
61. On myths surrounding coffee, see Thierry Rigogne, "Entre histoire et mythes: Le premier siècle des cafés à Paris (1670–1789)," in *Les histoires de Paris (XVIe–XVIIIe siècle)*, ed. Thierry Belleguic and Laurent Turcot (Paris: Hermann, 2012), II:163.
62. Landweber, "This Marvelous Bean," 193–223. Landweber dismisses the myths behind coffee drinking, especially those that point to one or more foreign origins of the drink, such as the myth of the unpopular Turkish ambassador of 1669 setting the vogue for coffee and the legend that an Armenian introduced the first café to France in 1672. This story is told in Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 55–61.
63. Philippe Sylvestre Dufour, *De l'usage du caphé, du thé, et du chocolate* (Lyon: Jean Girin, 1671) and *Traitez nouveaux du café, du thé et du chocolate* (Lyon: Jean Girin, 1685).
    Jean Chardin cites Dufour's writings on coffee. See Chardin, *Voyages* (1711), 66.
64. On the meaning of milk in France, see, for example, Meredith Martin, *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de' Medici to Marie-Antoinette* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Anne Mendelson, *Milk: The Surprising Story of Milk Through the Ages* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 26–27. Also see McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*, 179.
65. Landweber, "This Marvelous Bean," 208.
66. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 68.
67. Landweber argues that the lavish decor was distinct to the French café in the seventeenth-century and differed from the simpler ambiance of Ottoman, Persian, and English cafés. "This Marvelous Bean," 208.
68. For a discussion on coffeehouses in the Ottoman Empire, see Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).
69. Rudi Matthee argues that "irrespective of the dissemination and the quantities involved, the references to the ambience in which coffee was consumed in seventeenth-century Iran are unequivocal in their suggestiveness. They convey a picture of leisure and conviviality in a society which evidently was in a position to afford the importation of the new luxury commodity that coffee was." Rudi Matthee, "Coffee in Safavid Iran: Commerce and Consumption," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, no. 1 (1994): 23–24.
70. Chardin, *Voyages* (1711), 66.
71. Ibid. Also quoted in Matthee, "Coffee in Safavid Iran," 24.
72. Matthee, "Coffee in Safavid Iran," 24–26.
73. Ibid., 24.
74. On the evolution of the café and the emergence of the public sphere, see Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989) and Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*.
75. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 108.

76. Journal de Verdun, February 1715, 88.
77. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 124.
78. Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 239–40.
79. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 81.
80. *Journal de Verdun*, February 1715, 88.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. "Mehemet Riza Beg ambassador de Perse se baigne . . . ," Landry, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes.
84. Ibid.
85. Chardin, *Voyages* (1711), 203.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et les Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730* (Paris: École Pratique de Hautes Études, 1960), 232.
89. Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 13.
90. Ibid.
91. See Benedetta Craveri, *Reines et favorites: Le Pouvoir des femmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).
92. Bernd H. Dams and Andrew Zega, "La Ménagerie de Versailles et le Trianon de Porcelaine. Un passé restitué," *Versalia. Revue de la Société des amis de Versailles* 2 (1999): 66–71; Christine A. Jones, *Shapely Bodies: The Image of Porcelain in Eighteenth-Century France* (Lanham, MD: University of Delaware Press, 2013), ch. 1. Also Marie-Laure de Rochebrune, Anne-Cécile Sourisseau, and Vincent Bastien, *China at Versailles: Art and Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century Exhibition Album* (Paris: Éditions du Château de Versailles, Somogy Éditions d'Art, 2014).
93. For more on the baths at Versailles, see Jean-François Solnon, *Histoire de Versailles* (Paris: Perrin Collection Tempus, 2003), 70.
94. Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 23.
95. The Baron de Breteuil described the many women who visited the Beg: "He had more than forty women at a time in his bedroom and as many who waited outside to enter." See Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 122–23. An engraving found in a word puzzle book presents the ambassador as attractive to women. See "L'Ambassador et les Dames de Paris, no 4 dans une feuille de rébus," by J. B. Oudry. The key to the puzzle reads, "Les Dames, tour à tour s'empressaient pour voir l'Ambassadeur de Perse la pipe à la bouche, assis sur un carreau les pieds croisés; ells dansèrent en rond dans le dessein surtout de diverter ce beau monsieur." This image is reproduced in Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image."
96. Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 94.
97. Ibid., 79–80.
98. Chardin, *Travels in Persia*, 213.
99. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 139.
100. Chardin, *Travels in Persia*, 213.
101. Grivel, *Le Commerce de l'estampe*, 143–44. On fashion prints, see Fuhring et al., *A Kingdom of Images*, 14.
102. Grivel, *Le Commerce de l'estampe*, 143–44.
103. Ibid.
104. *Recueil des modes de la cour de France (Louis XIV)* (1678–93), binding 1703–4, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
105. According to Mary Schoeser, men in England were wearing the Persian vest by 1666 and Louis XIV adopted it in 1678. See Mary Schoeser, "Oriental Connections: Merchants, Adventurers and the Transmission of Cultural Concepts," in *Fashion Prints in the Age of Louis XIV: Interpreting the Art of Elegance*, ed. Kathryn Norberg and Sandra Rosenbaum (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2014), 174–84.

106. Mary Schoeser, *World Textiles: A Concise History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 126.
107. On the *grand habit* and *mantua*, see Jennifer Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 20–26.
108. See Schoeser, "Oriental Connections," 174–84.
109. See Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 23.
110. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisiéme*, 113.
111. An example of a robe of honor given by Shah Muhammad Khudabanda to the Ottoman Sultan Murad III is illustrated in Linda Komaroff, *The Gift Tradition in Islamic Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 44. It is made of dark green velvet and silver-wrapped thread.
112. For example, in December 1664, Louis XIV bestowed on fifty courtiers the honor of wearing the *justaucorps à brevet*. The *justaucorps à brevet* granted the courtiers advantages, such as the privilege of participating in the king's trips to Saint-Germain and Versailles without an invitation. Courtiers continued to prize the coat late into Louis XIV's reign. See Jones, *Sexing La Mode*, 24.
113. Chardin, *Voyages* (1711), 86–87.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid., 86.
116. Schoeser, "Oriental Connections," 170.
117. Mary Schoeser, *Textiles: The Art of Mankind* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012).
118. Chardin, *Voyages* (1711), 42.
119. Ibid.
120. Nicolas Faret, *L'Honneste-homme ou L'art de Plaire à la court* (Paris: Toussaincts du Bray, 1730), 25–26.
121. Ibid.
122. There were several equestrian engravings of the Beg. All of them are discussed and pictured in Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image."
123. Houasse René Antoine was a protégé of Charles Le Brun and worked on the chateau at Versailles. See Michel Laclotte and Jean-Pierre Cuzin, eds., *Dictionaire de la peinture* (Paris: Larousse, 2003).
124. On early modern equestrian portraits, see, for example, Roy Strong, *Van Dyck: Charles I on Horseback* (New York: Viking Press, 1972). The statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius is now housed in the Capitoline museum in Rome with a copy standing in the center of the Piazza del Campidoglio.
125. For a good discussion of French equestrian portraits of Louis XIV, see Robert W. Berger, "Charles Le Brun's Lost Equestrian Painting of Louis XIV (1663): A Recontruction," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 72, no. 2 (2009): 274–86.
126. *Journal de Verdun,* March 1715, 61–62.

## *Chapter 6*

1. "Asia," Nicolas Bonnart, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, cote Oa.
2. "Asia," Chez Deshayes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, cote Oa 56.
3. Baron de Breteuil, *Mémoires*, ed. Evelyne Lever (Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1992), 139.
4. John Chardin, *Travels in Persia, 1673–1677* (New York: Dover, 1988), 218.
5. Ibid.
6. Jean Chardin, Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, En Perse, et Autres Lieux de l'Orient (Paris: Jean Louis de Lorme, 1711), 34–35.
7. Ibid., 230.
8. François de Fénelon, *Les Avantures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse, ou Suite du quatrième livre de "l'Odyssée" d'Homère* (La Haye: A. Moetjens, 1700); Jean Castarède, *Histoire du luxe en France des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Eyrolles, 2007), 194. For French debates on luxury, see Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (New York: Berg, 2008), ch. 10.

9. See Chapter 4 for more on how the presents fit into the spectacle of Oriental embassies.
10. This engraving is reproduced and briefly discussed in Blandine Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 100 (1982): 109–30. Bouret states that the Duc de Saint-Simon's list of gifts is more sober and less flattering but more or less conforms to the image. However, this chapter argues that Saint-Simon clearly disparages the gifts and there is a clear discrepancy between his list and the one in the print.
11. Mumie is a rare balm used primarily for medicinal purposes.
12. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 136.
13. Ibid.
14. "Presents donnez au Roy par l'ambassadeur de Perse," S. Henry chez Chiquet rue Saint Jacques, Bibliothèque Nationale Cabinet des Estampes.
15. Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisième, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671), 113.
16. Jacques Le Goff, "A Coronation Program for the Age of Saint Louis: The Ordo of 1250," in *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, ed. János M. Bak (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 54.
17. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin* (1711), 44.
18. Ibid., 47.
19. See, for example, Henry de Saint Didier, *Traicté contenant les secrets du premier livre sur l'espée seule, mère de toutes armes, qui sont espée, dague, cappe, targue, bouclier, rondelle, l'espée à deux mains et les deux espées . . .* (Paris: Jean Mettayer & Matthurin Challenge, 1573); François Dancie, *L'Espée de combat ou l'usage de la tire des armes . . .* (Tulle: F. Aluitre, 1623); André Blaise Desbordes, *Discours de la théorie, de la pratique et de l'excellence des armes* (Nancy: Blaise André, 1610).
20. Corinne Thépaut-Cabassat, "Les presents du roi: le faste au service de la diplomatie," in *Visiteurs de Versailles: Voyageurs, Princes, Ambassadeurs 1682–1789*, ed. Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide et Bertrand Rondot (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), 134–35.
21. Marianna Shreve Simpson, "Gifts for the Shah: An Episode in Hapsburg-Safavid Relations During the Reigns of Philip III and Abbas I," in *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts*, ed. Linda Komaroff (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 125.
22. Carrie Anderson, "Material Mediators: Johan Maurits, Textiles, and the Art of Diplomatic Exchange," *Journal of Early Modern History* 20 (2016): 65. Anderson argues that textiles were used as a "common language of exchange" and "were capable of embodying, projecting, and shaping the terms of the diplomatic ties being brokered through the exchange itself."
23. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 57.
24. Although these Persian carpets, gifted to Europeans, did not hold up well, most were displayed and not used underfoot, allowing them to survive in European collections. An example exists in the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon that is similar to one that Shah Abbas presented to the Doge of Venice in 1603. See Komaroff, *The Gift Tradition in Islamic Art*, 43.
25. Quoted in Jon Thompson, "Early Safavid Carpets and Textiles," in *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501–1576*, ed. Jon Thompson and Sheila Canby (Milan: Skira Editore, 2003), 300.
26. Mary Schoesner, *Textiles: The Art of Mankind* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 262–63. For more on the Ardabil carpets, see articles from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and Los Angeles Museum of Art on the subjects. Also see Komaroff, *The Gift Tradition in Islamic Art*, 71.
27. Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin* (1711), 87.
28. Ibid., 25.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Marcia Pointou, *Brillant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 107–27. Pointou also explains that pearls became symbols of the East in eighteenth-century paintings.

33. Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin* (1711), 25.
34. Arash Khazeni, *Sky Blue Stone: The Turquoise Trade in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 12–16.
35. Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin* (1711), 15.
36. Engelbert Kaempfer gives a detailed description of the Mumie balm in his Latin edition of *Amoenitatum Exoticarum Politico-Physico-Medicarum . . .* (Lemgoviae: Typis & Impensis Henrici Wilhelmi Meyeri, 1712).
37. Komaroff, *The Gift Tradition in Islamic Art*, 13–15.
38. Anderson, "Material Mediators," 63–85. Anderson shows that for the recipient, the gift could take on different meanings than it held for the giver.
39. Ibid., 406. Blandine Bouret discusses Saint-Simon's disparaging comments regarding the ambassador. See Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image," 109–30.
40. Thépaut-Cabassat, "Les presents du roi," 130–35.
41. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 151–52. Also quoted in Thépaut-Cabassat, "Les presents du roi," 135.
42. Thépaut-Cabassat, "Les presents du roi," 135.
43. Elizabeth Benjamin, "L'Ambassade Perse, 1715," in *Visiteurs de Versailles: Voyageurs, Princes, Ambassadeurs 1682–1789*, ed. Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide et Bertrand Rondot (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), 172. On clocks in Iran, see Willem Floor, "Clocks," *Elr*, V:713–18.
44. Anderson, "Material Mediators," 71.
45. Meredith Martin rightly points out that prints were far from clear and viewers could draw different interpretations that were "culturally and historically contingent." Martin, "Mirror Reflections: Louis XIV, Phra Narai, and the Material Culture of Kingship," *Art History* 38, no. 4 (2015): 660.
46. Because the printer did not include his first name, we do not know specifically which member of the prestigious family of printers, the Langloises, produced the image.
47. Stéphane Castelluccio, *Les Fastes de la Galerie des Glaces: Recueil d'articles du Mercure gallant* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2007), 9.
48. Ibid., 9–17.
49. *Mercure galant*, February 1715.
50. Breteuil, *Mémoires*, 132–33.
51. Ibid., 104.
52. Pierre Goubert, *Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen*, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 271–76.
53. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 137. See *Soupirs de la France esclave, qui aspire après la liberté*, anonymous but attributed to Michel Levassor (Amsterdam, 1689). On the Protestant writings against Louis XIV's absolutist rule, see Henri Eugène Sée, *Les idées politiques en France au XVIIe siècle* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 194–209.
54. Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 138–39. On the Ottoman and French alliance and its critics, see for example, Géraud Poumarède, *Pour en finir avec la croisade: mythes et réalités de la lutte contre les Turcs aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004) and Michael Heath, "Unholy Alliance: Valois and Ottomans," *Renaissance Studies* 3, no. 3 (1989): 303–15.
55. On Jean-Baptiste Colbert's French quest to compete with other European powers in Asia and the role of the Dutch War in establishing the priority of Louis XIV's continental ambitions, see Glenn J. Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism, and the French Quest for Asian Trade* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996).
56. Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism, and the French Quest for Asian Trade*, 191.
57. Martin, "Mirror Reflections," 656.
58. The reader must be reminded that real diplomatic ambitions motivated the visit. For example, the shah of Persia sought a military alliance to thwart enemies and French missionaries looked for greater rights in Persia. See Anne Kroell, *Louis XIV, La Perse et Mascate* (Paris: Société

d'Histoire de l'Orient, 1977). Anne-Marie Touzard offers a good discussion of the different reasons for supporting the mission on the part of the Persian government and the French monarchy in *Le Drogman Padery* (Paris: Société Nouvelle Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 2005), 69–79. See Duc de Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, ed. and trans. Lucy Norton (London: Prion Books, 1968), 404.

59. Dirk Van der Cruysee, *Louis XIV and Siam* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), 388–89.
60. Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisième*, 117.
61. John Chardin, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies, The First Volume, Containing the Author's Voyage from Paris to Isfpahan. To which is added, The Coronation of the Present King of Persia, Solyman the Third* (London: Moses Pitt, 1686), 57.
62. Ashley Bruckbauer, "Ambassadors and Missionaries, Converts and Infidels: Visualizing the 1686 Siamese Embassy to Versailles," *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 43 (2015): 21–39. Bruckbauer further points out that the Siamese are related to "defeated Muslims" as in the print "The Royal and Magnificent Audience," in which a cartouche depicts the defeat of the Ottomans by the Emperor Leopold Ignatius I.
63. See Louis-Antoine Prat and Pierre Rosenberg, with a contribution by Martin Eidelberg, *Watteau: The Drawings* (London: Royal Academy, 2011). Also see Florence Raymond and Marie-Catherine Sahut, *Antoine Watteau et l'art de l'estampe* (Paris: Le Passage Beaux Livres Edition, 2010). Also see Alicia Weisberg, "Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing in Eighteenth-Century France," Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2005.
64. See Alan Wintermute and Colin B. Bailey, *Watteau and His World: French Drawing from 1700 to 1750* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1999). See the discussion in Weisberg, "Antoine Watteau and the Cultural Value of Drawing in Eighteenth-Century France," 119.
65. This print, "Portrait equestre de Mehemet Riza Beg," is in red chalk and part of a series of studies of the ambassador and in a private collection is reproduced in Bouret, "L'Ambassade persane à Paris en 1715 et son image," 109–30. Bouret calls the simplicity of the Beg's costume *déconcernante* (disconcerting).
66. *Mohammed Reza Bey, Persian Ambassador to France during the Reign of Louis XIV*, attributed to Antoine Coypel, in private collection.
67. Castelluccio, *Les Fastes de la Galerie des Glaces*, 18–19.
68. Ibid., 129.
69. Meredith Martin and Gillian Weiss, "'Turks' on Display During the Reign of Louis XIV," *L'Esprit Créateur* 53, no. 4 (2014): 98–112.
70. See Jean Marie Apostolides, *Le Roi-machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981), 138–39.
71. Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, 405.
72. Ibid., 403–4. Madame d'Orléans, Louis XIV's sister-in-law, shared Saint-Simon's suspicions that the ambassador was a fraud. Charlotte-Elisabeth, Duchesse d'Orléans, *Correspondance compléte de madame duchesse d'Orléans née princesse palatine, mére du regent*, trans. G. Brunet (Paris: Charpentier, 1863), letter of October 1, 1717. This is also cited in McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*, 255.
73. Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, 404.
74. Ibid.
75. "Louis XIV reçoit l'ambassadeur Mehemet Reza-Bey dans la galerie des glaces" is part of the collection of the Chateau de Versailles and now attributed to Nicolas de Largillière. The painting is discussed and reproduced in Benjamin, "L'Ambassade Perse, 1715," 172.
76. Saint-Simon, *Memoirs*, 405.
77. See Nicole Garnier, *Antoine Coypel, 1661–1722* (Paris: Arthèna, 1989).
78. See Perrin Stein, "Exoticism as Metaphor: Turquerie in Eighteenth-Century French Art," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1997, 54.

## *Chapter 7*

1. "Tyrannical" and "despotic" had similar meanings, but the former was used more frequently in the seventeenth century. The use of the term "despotism" began in the year 1700. See Thomas Kaiser, "The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (March 2000): 9; R. Koebner, "Despot and Despotism: Vicissitudes of a Political Term," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 15 (1951): 275–302.
2. Olivier Bonnerot, *La Perse dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1988), 59.
3. Louis-Jacques d'Hôtelfort, *Amanzolide: Nouvelle Historique et Galante, qui contient les avantures secretes de Mehemed-Riza-Beg, Ambassadeur du Sophi de Perse, à la cour de Louis-Le-Grand, en 1715* (La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1716), 1. *Amanzolide*, similar to other Oriental fairy tales, appealed to French curiosity about intimate areas of Asian politics and life, such as the king's palace, the harem, and amorous relationships, which Westerners knew little about. Marie-Louise Dufrenoy, *L'Orient romanesque en France, 1704–1789* (Montreal, 1946), II:15, 30.
4. Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisième, Roy de Perse, Et qui s'est passé de plus memorable dans les deux premieres années de son Regne* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671), first cover page illustration.
5. For more on the place of eunuchs in Safavid politics, see Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 60–61. Translation from Jean Chardin, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies, The First Volume Containing the Author's Voyage from Paris to Ispahan To which is added, The Coronation of this Present King of Persia, Solyman the Third* (London: Moses Pitt, 1686), 42. The French version of this quote can be found in Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisième*, 118.
6. Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 61.
7. Madeleine Dobie, *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 45.
8. Translation from Chardin, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia*, 42.
9. Translation from ibid., 130. The French version of this quote can be found: Jean Chardin, *Le Couronnement de Soleïmaan Troisième*, 382.
10. The black eunuchs were in charge of the palace interior, while the white ones guarded the entrance to the harem. See Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 60. Translation from Chardin, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia*, 42.
11. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, En Perse, et Autres Lieux de l'Orient* (Paris: Jean Louis de Lorme, 1711), II:213.
12. Ibid.
13. See, for example, the discussion on critical images of Louis XIV in Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
14. D'Hôtelfort, *Amanzolide*, 2.
15. Quoted in Bonnerot, *La Perse dans la littérature et la pensée françaises*, 20. See Antoine Galland, *Préface à la Bibliothèque Orientale, ou Dictionnaire Universel . . . par Monsieur d'Herbelot* (1697), Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds français, ms. 6130, f. 3.
16. d'Hôtelfort, *Amanzolide*, 1.
17. Ibid, 2.
18. Ibid, 2.
19. André Daulier Deslandes, *Les Beautez de la Perse; ou La description de ce qu'il y a de plus curieux dans ce royaume, enrichie de la carte du païs, & de plusieurs estampes dessignées sur les lieux* (Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1673).
20. Paul Lucas, who spent 1701 and 1702 in Persia, is an example of an eighteenth-century traveler who criticized the caravan routes. He wrote, "Il y faut toujours avoir les injures à la bouche et les armes à la main, si on ne veut point recevoir d'affront." Quoted in Laurence Lockhart,

*The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 44–45.

21. Ibid., 3.
22. Ibid., 4.
23. Bonnerot, *La Perse dans la littérature et la pensée françaises,* 44–45. See La Forest de Bourgon, *Relation de Perse où l'on voit l'état de la Religion dans la plus grande partie de l'Orient . . .* (Angers: J. Hubault, 1710).
24. D'Hôtelfort, *Amanzolide*, 9.
25. Ibid., 10.
26. Ibid., 14.
27. Ibid.
28. Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 9.
29. Ibid.
30. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Relation de l'interieur du serrail du Grand Seigneur* (Paris: Olivier de Varenner, 1675).
31. Ibid., 243.
32. Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 9; N. M. Penzer, *The Harem* (New York: Dover, 2005).
33. Lori J. Marso, "The Stories of Citizens: Rousseau, Montesquieu, and de Staël Challenge Enlightenment Reason," *Polity* 30 (1998): 448.
34. See Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*; Diana Schaub, *Erotic Liberalism: Women and Revolution in Montesquieu's Persian Letters* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995); Marso, "The Stories of Citizens."
35. Diana Schaub, in *Erotic Liberalism*, for example, argues that Montesquieu believed women's freedom essential to liberty.
36. Madeleine Dobie, in *Foreign Bodies*, convincingly shows that Montesquieu's agenda was more complex than scholars such as Schaub have suggested. Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*.
37. Dobie argues that Montesquieu did not accept "the Oriental model of gender relations and that he considered the unequal relationship between a master and his slaves to be dangerously unstable." Instead of embracing the Oriental or French model, Dobie follows Joan Landes by arguing he advocated a middle way in which women should be "managed" with more defined roles in the domestic home life (*Foreign Bodies*, 54). See Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 37. Dobie overturns the idea that Montesquieu voiced either a positive or negative view concerning women's role in society. Instead, she demonstrates how the harem in the *Persian Letters* provides a reevaluation of the place of women.
38. Dobie argues that in the *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu's discussion of slavery in the Orient and within the harem speaks for his ambivalence about slavery in the French colonies. *Foreign Bodies*, 39.
39. Robert Crews, *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2015). See Jean Calmard, "The French Presence in Safavid Persia: A Preliminary Study," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 319; Willem Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721–1729* (Paris: Cahiers de Studia Iranica, 1998).
40. "Relation Historique du detrônement du roy de Perse et des dernieres revolutions arrivées pendant les années 1722. 1723. 1724. & 1725 . . . ," *Mercure de France*, November 1726. This was also printed as a separate pamphlet under the same title in 1727. See *Relation Historique du detrônement du roy de Perse et des dernieres revolutions arrivées pendant les années 1722. 1723. 1724. & 1725* (Paris: Charles Huart, 1727). Laurence Lockhart, in *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, attributes this text to Father Reynal in his bibliography. However, this chapter refers to the copy in the *Mercure*. Prior to 1789, the term "revolution" in French meant a reversal, great event, or change in government. See the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* of 1694 and 1762.
41. Father Krusinski was born in Poland in 1675. He joined the Jesuit order and learned Persian and Arabic during his training. In 1707 the order sent him to Persia, where he

became head of all Jesuit missions. He also represented the king of France at the Persian court. He lived in Isfahan through the siege and Mahmud's entry into the city. Mahmud treated him well and thought he had special powers. He left Isfahan after Mahmud's successor, Ashraf, murdered Shah Husayn in 1725. According to Sirus Ghani, Father Krusinski most likely sent his notebook to Father du Cerceau who edited it and inserted a history of Persia. See Sirus Ghani, *Iran and the West* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1987), 214.

42. On the Jesuit missions, see Rudi Matthee, "Poverty and Perseverance: The Jesuit Mission of Isfahan and Shamakhi," *Al-Qantara* 36, no. 2 (2015): 463–501, and Rudi Matthee, "Jesuits in Safavid Persia," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online). The Jesuits were late to come to Persia and did not arrive until after 1642, around twenty years after the Augustinians.
43. Father du Cerceau, *Histoire de la dernière revolution de perse*, vol. 1 (Paris: Briasson, 1728). This chapter makes use of the English translation that appeared in 1733: Father du Cerceau, *History of the Late Revolutions of Persia: Taken from the Memoirs of Father Krusinski Procurator of the Jesuits of Ispahan* (London: J. Pemberton, 1733).
44. For details on Father Cerceau's editing of the original text and a biography of both Cerceau and Krusinski, see Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 516–25.
45. "If these Relations I might correct fifty Mistakes of the same Importance. I shall only hint at one, which is so contrary to all manner of probability." Cerceau, *Histoire de la dernière revolution*, xxii.
46. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 522.
47. Peter the Great, for example, sent an ambassador to the shah in 1715 to act as a spy and uncover the true state of affairs in Persia. The Russian ambassador, Artemii Petrovich Volyksky, reported that the Safavid Empire was in such disarray that a small Russian army could defeat it. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 99; Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 246.
48. "Relation Historique," 2460.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., 2470.
51. Contemporary sources noted that Shah Husayn spent more time on drink and debauchery and ignored pressing domestic problems and the affairs of Persia's neighboring states. He maintained a costly harem that drained the treasury and remained apathetic even as Persia's military power declined. Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids*, 241–45; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*; Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*.
52. "Relation Historique," 2472.
53. Ibid. A *vali* was a viceroy of Persia. Lockhart believes the Vali of Arabistan was Sayyid Abdullah, although others argue that the Vali was Abdullah's father, Sayyid Muhammad. He gained influence over the shah but unfortunately, turned out to be a traitor. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 4, 134, 143.
54. "Relation Historique," 2478.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ahmad Agha was a white eunuch who served in the shah's court. He became Qullar-aqasi, the commander of the Qullar (slaves), a corps founded by Shah Abbas I. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 147–64; "Relation Historique," 2478.
58. "Relation Historique," 2479. See Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*, 164, for a relation of the death of Agha Ahmad.
59. "Relation Historique," 2633–34.
60. Ibid.
61. The story of Ahmad Agha's death by poison is told in Cerceau, *History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 86.
62. Ibid., 69.
63. Ibid., 40.

64. Susan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad, eds., *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Ernest Gellner, "Tribalism and the State in the Middle East," in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 109–26; Hirotake Maeda, "Hamza Mirza and the 'Caucasian Elements' at the Safavid Court: A Path Toward the Reforms of Shah Abbas I," *Orientalist* 1 (2001): 155–71; Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2003).
65. Cerceau, *History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 59.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 119–20.
69. Thomas Kaiser refers to the Ottoman Empire as the "standard model" of despotism. Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 11. Alain Grosrichard calls the Ottoman Empire "the illustration" of "despotic power." Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1998), 19.
70. Thomas Kaiser, "Louis le Bien-Aimé and the Rhetoric of the Royal Body," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 131–61.
71. Cerceau, *History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 199.
72. "Relation Historique," 2635.
73. An example of a French text that told the tale of the rise of Nadir Shah and his cruelty is André de Claustre, *Histoire de Thamas Kouli-Kan: roi de Perse* (Paris: Briasson, 1758). For more on Nadir Shah in Persia see Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006) and Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac, 1938).
74. Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 12.
75. Grosrishard, *The Sultan's Court*.
76. Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 69.
77. See Antoine Furetière, *Le Dictionnaire universel d'Antoine Furetière*, vol. 1 (Rotterdam: Chez Arnout et Reinier Leers, 1690).
78. Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960); Clarence D Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought, and Literature (1520–1660)* (Paris: Boivin, 1941); and Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453–1517)* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967).
79. Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 11; A. Le Guay, *Alliances du roy avec le Turc, et autres; justifies contre les calomnies des Espagnols et de leurs partisans* (Paris: T. Du Bray, 1626); Jérémie du Ferrier, *Le Catholique d'estat, ou Discours politique des alliances du Roy Tres-Chrestien contre les calomnies des ennemis de son Estat* (Paris: Bouillerot, 1626).
80. Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 14.
81. Ibid., 16.
82. Ibid.
83. Gilles Veinstein, "Introduction," in *Le Paradis des infidels: relation de Yirmisekiz Celebi Mehmed Efendi, ambassadeur ottoman en France sous la Regence*, ed. Mehmed Efendi (Paris: Maspero, 1981), 16, 30.
84. Quoted in Julia Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey: The Impact of Turkey on the Construction of French Identity, 1660–1789," PhD diss., Graduate School, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2001, 77.
85. Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 77; Veinstein, "Introduction," 33.
86. Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 77–100.

87. For journals that described Mehmed Efendi's visit, see *Le Nouveau Mercure de France*, March–August 1721; *La Gazette de France*, March–December 1721 and January 1722; Louis de Rouvroy Saint-Simon, *Mémoires complets et authentiques du duc de Saint-Simon sur le siècle de Louis XIV et la Régence*, ed. Adolphe Chéruel, 20 vols. (Paris: L. Hachette, 1856–58); La Duchesse d'Orléans, *Correspondance de Madame, duchesse d'Oréans*, trans. and ed. E. Joeglé (Paris: Bouillon, 1890), letters of March and April 1721; Edmond-Jean-François Barbier, *Journal historique et anecdotique du régne de Louis XIV (1718–1763)*, ed. A. de la Villegills (Paris: Renouard et Cie., 1847–49), I:80–81. For more on the embassy, see E. d'Aubigny, "Un ambassadeur turc à Paris sous la Régence," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 3 (1889): 78–91, 200–235, 89.
88. Perrin Stein, "Exoticism as Metaphor: Turquerie in Eighteenth-Century French Art," Ph.D. Diss., New York University, 1997, 129–58; Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 100.
89. Georges Wildenstein, *Le Peintre Aved: sa vie et son oeuvre 1702–1766* (Paris: Beaux-Arts, 1922), II:183; Stein, "Exoticism as Metaphor," 134. See *Anecdotes de l'ambassade Turque en France* (attributed to Voltaire by E. Courbet) (Paris, 1743) and *Mercure de France*, January 1742.
90. Stein, "Exoticism as Metaphor," 129–58; Landweber, "French Delight in Turkey," 100.
91. Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 17. For a good study of the eighteenth-century obsession with Ottomans in Opera, see Larry Wolff, *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).
92. See Voltaire, *An essay on universal history, the manners, and spirit of nations, from the reign of Charlemaign to the age of Lewis XIV,* trans. Mr. Nugent, 4 vols. (Dublin: printed for S. Cotter, 1759).
93. David Young, "Montesquieu's View of Despotism and His Use of Travel Literature," *Review of Politics* 40 ( July 1978): 392–405; Kaiser, "The Evil Empire?," 9.
94. Quoted in Young, "Montesquieu's View of Despotism," 396.
95. Quoted in Young, "Montesquieu's View of Despotism," 398.
96. Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court*, 31; Young, "Montesquieu's View of Despotism," 7.
97. Quoted in Bonnerot, *La Perse dans la littérature et la pensée françaises*, 51.
98. Voltaire, *An essay on universal history,* IV:252.
99. Ibid., IV:254.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., IV:257.
102. Ibid.
103. Studies of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* have interpreted his description of Oriental institutions as a caricature of French absolutism. See Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*, 43.
104. Montesquieu described Persia as despotic and searched for information on the repressive aspects of its government and society. He picked through these sources for information that best advanced his argument but did not necessarily paint a balanced or accurate picture of Asian governments. David Young argues that Montesquieu relied heavily on four travelers for his information on the Middle East: Paul Ricaut, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, and Jean Chardin. These travelers all suggested that there was no check on the power of the sovereign. However, they pointed out that Islamic law was above the ruler. Chardin, for example, noted that the shah could have difficulty making his more religiously conservative subjects drink wine, which was forbidden in Islam. Accordingly, Montesquieu, in his *Spirit of the Laws*, added that religion could limit the power of the kings. Still, Montesquieu paints Asian government at its worst. David Young points out: "If Montesquieu could document his sketch of despotism, he overlooked a great deal in the travel literature that could have modified his view of Oriental states." For example, Montesquieu declares that there is no law in a despotic state. But the travelers described the law from the Qu'ran that acted as civil law in Islamic lands. Voltaire criticized Montesquieu for ignoring the role that Islamic law played in limiting arbitrary rule. See Young, "Montesquieu's View of Despotism," 394–96. Also see Muriel Dodds, *Les Récits de voyages sources de l'Esprt des lois* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1980)

and *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de Montesquieu* (Geneva: Louis Desgraves, 1954). For information on fairy tales that influenced Montesquieu, see Franz Hahn, *François Pétis de la Croix et ses Mille et un jours* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 34–36 and Dufrenoy, *L'Orient romanesque en France*, I:149–50.

105. John Chardin, *Travels in Persia, 1673–1677* (New York: Dover, 1988), 189.
106. SeeG. L. Van Roosbroeck, *The Persian Letters Before Montesquieu* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), 8–9. Roosbroeck suggests that Montesquieu read the popular harem, romance stories in his research on the harem. He also read a wealth of different sources including travel accounts, histories, and descriptions of foreign countries. See Dodds, *Les Récits de voyages.*
107. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, eds. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone (Cambridge,UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29.
108. Ibid., 28.
109. Ibid.
110. Antoine Pecquet, *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de Perse* (Amsterdam, 1745). The work is attributed to Antoine Pecquet in A.-A. Barbier's *Dictionnaire des anonymes.* Robert Darnton agrees with this attribution. It was published in 1745 and reprinted six times until 1769. See Robert Darnton, "Mademoiselle Bonafon and the Private Life of Louis XV: Communication Circuits in Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 87, no. 1 (2004): 115 n. 24.
111. Quoted in Darnton, "Mademoiselle Bonafon and the Private Life of Louis XV," 116.

## *Epilogue*

1. Baron de Breteuil, *Mémoires,* ed. Evelyne Lever (Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1992), 122–23: "Mais ce n'est pas seulement le peuple qui s'est empressé pour le voir à Paris: les dames . . . et plusieurs hommes de la première qualité ont eu la même curiosité, et j'y ai vu la foule si grande qu'il y avait souvent plus de quarante femmes dans sa chambre et autant qui attendaient pur y entrer."
2. Montesquieu, *Persian Letters,* trans. C. J. Betts (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 83.
3. Ibid., 172.
4. Ibid., 173.
5. Alain Grosrichard sees Montesquieu's Orient as a phantasm—a threatening apparition of despotism. Judith Shklar calls the Orient "not a geographic area but nightmare territory of the mind." Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1998); Judith Shklar, *Montesquieu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
6. See the discussion of singularity in the *Persian Letters* in Perry Anderson, "Persian Letters (Montesquieu, 1721)," in *The Novel,* vol. 2, *Forms and Themes*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 161–72. Anderson calls attention to the powerful tension between the singular vantage point of the Persians with the "reality of things" / "the things as they are" in France. Also see Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 78.
7. Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, 78.
8. Ibid., 75.
9. Ibid., 53.
10. Ibid., 122.
11. Ibid., 49.
12. Ibid., 49.
13. Ibid., 45.
14. Ibid., 66.
15. Ibid., 66–67.
16. Ibid., 270.
17. See David Porter's use of the term *chinoiserie* in David Porter, "Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 395–411, n. 2.

18. Jean-Baptiste du Boyer, Marquis d'Argens, *Lettres Chinoises, ou correspondence philosophiqye, historique, et critique, entre un Chinois voyageur à Paris et ses correspondans à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse et au Japon* (The Hague: Pierre Paupie, 1740).
19. As David Allen Harvey suggests, China "was not exactly a blank screen on which European observers could project whatever they wanted—the ethnographic information provided by the Jesuits and other observers was too extensive and too specific for that—but did serve as a sort of Rorschach test in which those Europeans who contemplated it (Jesuits, Deists, philosophers, and political economists) could see what they wanted to see." David Allen Harvey, *The French Enlightenment and Its Others: The Mandarin, the Savage, and the Invention of the Human Sciences* (New York: Palgrave Macmilan, 2012), 41–45. The Persian mirror presents an example of how European conceptions of Asian empires developed according to contemporary European political circumstances. Before Persia became the mirror of France for Montesquieu in 1721, the Ottoman Empire had held Europe's attention—that is, until its power appeared to decay. China then arose as the next inspiration for European writers. Perry Anderson notes, "Montesquieu's novel was written in the interval between the capture of the European imaginary between these two empires. Persia could play the role of an intriguing, more indistinct third—close enough in culture to Turkey to retain the motif of the seraglio, distant enough to represent no threat to Europe, unfamiliar enough to offer an alternative model as sharp and definite as the mandarinate in China. . . . Persia was an ideal template for Montesquieu's exercise." Anderson, "Persian Letters," 164.

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# INDEX

Figures are indicated by *f* following the page number

For the benefit of digital users, indexed terms that span two pages (e.g., 52–53) may, on occasion, appear on only one of those pages.