

GEORGIA IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN SAFAVID IRAN AND MUSCOVITE STATE (FIRST QUARTER OF THE 17TH CENTURY)

Abstract

The main purpose of this work is to reveal Georgia's role against the background of Safavid Iran (Persia) – Muscovite State (Russia) diplomatic relations in the mentioned period and determine - what place occupied Georgia in these two states' foreign policy. As it is known, for many decades, the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran were trying to dominate the Caucasus. In the battles to take over this territory, sometimes one, sometimes another, was gaining temporary advantage. Since the 16th century, Muscovite State (Russia) has been interested in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea.

Keywords: *Georgia, Kingdom of Kakheti, Kingdom of Kartli, Safavid Iran, Muscovite State, Ottoman Empire, Caucasus, Caspian Sea, Shah Abbas I, King Mikhail Romanov, King Alexander II, King Teimuraz I*

In 1578-1590 there was Ottoman-Iran war. Initially advantage was on the Ottomans' side. The complicated situation forced Iran's government leaders to look for an ally. They took into account the Muscovite State's hostile attitude towards the Ottoman Empire and decided on it.

In 1586 from Iran to Muscovite State was sent an embassy, followed by a reciprocal embassy from Muscovite State to Iran in 1588. It was in the 80s of the 16th century that the permanent trade and diplomatic relations foundation between Safavid Iran and the Muscovite State was laid.

It's noteworthy that in the 80s of the 16th century, Muscovite State-Kakheti Kingdom diplomatic relationships renewed again in 1587, resulting in the signature of the contract "Book of Oaths." In 1589, King Alexander II received from King Theodor an official confirmation of patronage – "Deed of Mercy". In consequence Muscovite State got more activated in the Caucasus.

The mentioned Iran-Ottoman war ended with the Istanbul peace treaty in 1590 with very negative results for the Safavids.

It seems that Abbas I, the young shah of Iran (1587-1629), used this truce for the implementation of domestic and foreign reforms and, in 1603, after due preparations, renewed the war against the Ottoman Empire. In such circumstances in Safavid State, they decided to send again an embassy to Moscow, now under Lachin Beg's leadership (1604-1605). Unfortunately, no information is preserved about its purpose or the negotiations with the ambassadors in the Boyar Council. Maybe, Lachin Beg went to Moscow to ask for

military assistance, as the mentioned war had just begun. This opinion is strengthened by the fact that in the summer of 1604, three regiments (10,000 riflemen) were sent from Moscow to the Caucasus, but Russians were defeated in the battle with Ottomans, lost two-thirds of their army and retreated, thus worsening their situation in the Caucasus.

The renewed war against the Ottomans in 1603 was conducted to the Iranians' advantage. In this war, the Shah of Iran convoked Georgian kings to join him. King Giorgi X (1600-1605) of Kartli and King Alexander II (1574-1601; 1602-1605) of Kakheti, after some hesitation, showed up at the Shah Abbas' camp and took part in the capture of the Yerevan fortress. For their bravery in battles against the Ottomans, the Iranian ruler richly rewarded them. Instead, he cut off certain territories from Kartli and Kakheti and settled nomadic tribes there.

Shah Abbas knew that Alexander II was still relying on the Muscovite State. For him, Georgia's rapprochement with the Russians' State was totally unacceptable. The Shah did not forgive King Alexander for this, and in 1605 he made King Alexander's youngest son, Constantine, growing up at his court from his youth, kill him and Giorgi Batonishvili. The renegade and murderer Constantine reigned in Kakheti under the name of Constantine I (1605), but Kakhetians rebelled and killed him in a battle in 1605.

At that time Muscovite State was fighting against Poles and Swedes. It did not achieve the desired results in the Caucasus either. Russian government only managed to send an embassy to Iran in 1607, condemning Russian policy towards Kakheti. It should also report to the Shah that the Muscovite State was still negotiating with Western European countries for a common war against Ottomans and had even financially supported Kaiser Rudolph II (1576-1612). This embassy didn't reach Iran, - its head, Ivan Romodanovsky, died during his way through the Volga River area, where peasants revolted.

Shah Abbas could not reconcile to the fact that he couldn't annex Kartli and Kakheti to his kingdom firmly. All this was added to the fact that the eastern part of Samtskhe with Akhaltsikhe still remained in the Ottomans' hands. In the autumn of 1613, the ruler of Iran marched toward Georgia with a large army. In 1614, the first campaign of Shah Abbas in Georgia took place. Kizilbashs terribly devastated Eastern Georgia, especially Kakheti.

At that time, at the beginning of the 17th century, in Muscovite State reigned anarchy, caused by internal feudal conflicts in the country. All this ended with putting on the Muscovite State throne of Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov (1613-1645) on February 21, 1613. This marked the beginning of a new dynasty in the Muscovite State.

The shah of Iran was interested in Russians building fortresses on the North Caucasian rivers and thereby strengthening Iran's back. In 1615, an embassy headed by Bulat Beg was sent to Moscow exactly for this purpose. It was Bulat Beg, thanks to whom Shah Abbas recognized the coming of the Romanovs dynasty to the Muscovite State throne.

As for the Georgian issue, Moscow's side protested against Iran because they were breaching the Kakheti Kingdom-Moscow oath of allegiance, which concluded on September 27, 1587. Bulat Beg's embassy didn't tell anything to the Russian King about Georgia. That's why the Moscow side sent a messenger, Grigory Shakhmatov (1615-1616), to Iran, but this mission didn't bring any results because Iran's Shah told Georgia was a subservient country of Iran from the beginning, and he wanted it himself.

In Kakheti, at that time, was being prepared a rebellion, with the active participation of the King of Kakheti Teimuraz I (King of Kakheti 1606-1648; King of Kartl-Kakheti 1625-1632).

When Shah Abbas learned about these rebellions, he took urgent measures and started preparations for war. He did not delay for long and, in the spring of 1616, marched towards Georgia with a large army. The multitude of the enemy overpowered the rebels, defeating them. The ruler of Iran terribly devastated Eastern Georgia.

It's noteworthy that Muscovite State rulers wanted to maintain friendly relations with Iran. Moscow, at that time, was waging a war against the Poles and Swedes and needed material assistance. For this reason, the Moscow leaders decided to ask the Safavids for monetary assistance.

For this purpose, the court of Muscovite State decided to send an embassy to Iran. Since Shakhmatov had not yet returned, they knew nothing about Iran's new aggression towards Georgia. Therefore, when on May 23, 1616, an embassy was sent from Moscow to Iran under Fyodor Leontyev and Bogdan Timofeev's leadership, the ambassadors were instructed, along with the abovementioned loan, only to remind the Shah of the fact that Kakheti Kingdom was Muscovite State vassal. But when Shakhmatov returned to Moscow (July 15, 1616) with unfavorable news between Iran and Georgia, A messenger was immediately sent to Leontyev's embassy, who had to express protest to the Shah because of the aggressive policy implemented in Georgia.

It's noteworthy that neither T. Leontyev's embassy had great results. However, the Shah, in response to this embassy, still sent his embassy to Moscow under Kaya Sultan and Bulat Beg's leadership. In the spring of 1617, this embassy went to Moscow together with the Russian embassy. In this case, the position of the Shah in relation to the Muscovite State was revealed again. He refused to lend money to Leontiev's embassy, but he gave silver bars worth 7 thousand manats to Kaya Sultan and Bulat Beg, which he sent as a gift to the Russian King. The main goal of this embassy was to make the Muscovite State strengthen Iran's back and build fortresses in the North Caucasus. Moscow royal court postponed this issue for an indefinite period because, at that time, the Muscovite State was still waging a war with the Poles and Swedes, and it no longer had the necessary money for the war. because of this, it was in a hopeless situation. In 1617 and 1618, respectively, the royal court of King Michael Romanov sent ambassadors to England and the Netherlands to borrow money but did not receive the required amount. In the meantime, the Muscovite State signed peace treaties with Sweden (in August 1617) and Poland (in December 1618).

King Teimuraz I tried to use the Muscovite State and the Ottomans against Iran. In 1621, he even came to Istanbul to the Ottoman Sultan, but to no avail.

Shah Abbas could not accept such policy of King Teimuraz. The latter did not trust the ruler of Iran despite the fact that his mother, Ketevan, and his two sons, Levan and Alexander, were held hostage by the shah. To revenge, by order of the Shah, in 1620, both sons of King Teimuraz were made eunuchs, after which the younger Levan died, and the elder Alexander became mad. A little later, in September 1624, in the city of Shiraz, he tortured and killed Queen Ketevan, who became a martyr for Christ's death. It should be noted that two years earlier, in 1622, also in Shiraz, the Shah of Iran killed the king of Kartli Luarsab II (1606-1615), who had been in captivity since 1615.

Though Moscow didn't like Iran's aggression against Georgia, it couldn't take appropriate measures. It seems that the South Caucasus and, therefore, providing assistance to Georgia was not a priority for it and was a secondary problem. As we see, the Muscovite State leaders, due to the aggression carried out on Georgia, limited themselves only to protests against the Shah of Iran.

In the same period, in 1622, Shah Abbas conveniently used England - Portugal opposition expelling the Portuguese from the Hormuz island with the help of the English. Seizing this island allowed the Shah to transport Iranian silk to Europe by sea. Thus, the Safavid State opened a new southern way for the silk export, independent from Ottomans and Russians: Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean-Atlantic Ocean. After that, in 1623-1624, the troops of Shah Abbas fought with great success in the Middle East.

After all this, Shah Abbas decided to settle the issue of Eastern Georgia once and for all in favor of Iran. At the beginning of 1625, he sent a large army to Georgia. On March 25, 1625, the rebellious Georgians suddenly attacked and destroyed the main part of the Iranian army encamped in the Martkopi Valley.

After that, the ruler of Iran sent troops of many thousands to Georgia. In the battle held near the Marabda village on July 1, 1625, Georgians were defeated, but losses from the Iranian side were much higher. Georgians didn't accept their fate and started a guerilla war against Iranian invaders, where they inflicted great losses on the enemy.

Dissatisfied with Iran's aggressive policy towards Georgia, Moscow government sent an embassy to Shah Abbas under the leadership of Grigory Tyufyakin. The Muscovite State government protested against Iran's aggressive policy towards Georgia. At the same time, King Mikhail Romanov was offering his mediation to the Shah of Iran to move King Teimuraz I away from the Ottomans. If the Shah would guarantee the safety of King Teimuraz, the King of the Muscovite State was ready to act as a mediator between them.

In such a situation, the Shah of Iran was forced to compromise and reconcile with Teimuraz I through the mediation of King Mikhail Romanov. The only thing that was unpleasant for the Shah was that the King of Muscovite State acted as the "protector" of King Teimuraz. The ruler of Iran did not want the former (1587-1606) relationship between the kingdoms of Moscow and Kakheti to be restored with his involuntary participation. He considered that this was inadmissible and excluded.

In 1625, Shah Abbas sent an embassy to Moscow under the leadership of Rusan Beg, a Georgian converted to Islam. During the conversation with Russian boyars, the ambassador justified the aggressive action of the Shah towards Georgia by the fact that King Teimuraz did not approach him and ask to forgive him for his crime, on the contrary, he ran to the Ottoman Sultan, the enemy of Iran, to ask for help. When the boyars reminded the ambassador that the King of Kakheti was "under patronage" of the kings of Muscovite State and cited as evidence the old book of oaths, the Shah's ambassador kept it all away and reported to the boyars that the Georgian kings were never subject to the kings of the Muscovite State and were independent of them.

Daud Khan, Alaverdi Khan Undiladze's son, who was in Tbilisi in 1626, acted as a mediator in King Teimuraz and Shah Abbas's negotiations. He, on behalf of Shah Abbas, demanded that King Teimuraz break up with the Ottomans and move to Iran's side. These negotiations bore fruit, and in 1626, King Teimuraz agreed to reconcile with Shah Abbas, after which he was recognized by the Shah of Iran as the King of Kartl-Kakheti.

After the settlement of Kartl-Kakheti affairs, in the same 1626, Shah Abbas's troops took Akhaltsikhe and expelled the Ottomans from there.

Shortly after these events, Shah Abbas died in January 1629, after which the political situation in the Middle East changed dramatically. Muscovite State-Safavid Iran diplomatic relations continued, where the issue of Georgia was occupying an important place.