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DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN SAFAVID IRAN AND MUSCOVITE STATE AND GEORGIA AT THE END OF THE 16TH CENTURY AND BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY

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The main purpose of this work is to present the diplomatic relations between Safavid Iran (Persia) and the Muscovite State (Russia) in the mentioned period in the foreground and evaluate the importance of the place of Georgia in the background of these relations. In order to better present the mentioned issue, we considered it appropriate to briefly review the important political events of the Middle East, of both the mentioned epoch and its previous period.

For many decades, the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran tried to dominate the Caucasus. This area often became the epicenter of their battles. In the 16th century, their confrontation was going on with alternating advantages. From the 16th century, the powerful Muscovite State emerged with a similar interest, and the issue of access to the Caspian Sea was raised before the foreign policy of its increasingly centralized government with a particular acuteness.

Under the pretext of solving this problem, in 1552 it conquered Kazan and in 1556 - Astrakhan. Access to the Caspian Sea was important for the Muscovite State, as it would be able to expand its trade with eastern countries.

Since the middle of the 16th century, when the Volga-Astrakhan-Caspian shipping and trade highway gained great importance, the rivalry of these three powerful states for the control of the Caucasus, and especially its eastern part, became even more acute. It was on the western coast of the Caspian Sea that passed the shortest way, enabling the European states to connect with the Eastern countries, khanates, or a number of political entities.

The southward advance of the Muscovite State was met negatively in the political circles of the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran. In addition to dominating the mentioned trade-navigation route, the Russian state's chance to dominate the Caucasus was also increased by the fact that the Caucasian people, including the Georgians, who fought against the conqueror Ottomans and Iranians, considered it a savior.

In 1577-1578, the Ottoman Empire settled relations with European countries, after which it broke the 1555 Treaty of Amasya and, in 1578, started a war against Safavid Iran (Ottoman-Iranian War of 1578-1590). This war was initially going on with the advantage of the Ottomans. They achieved success in the South Caucasus and attacked the territory of Iran itself.

In the 80s of the 16th century, the successes achieved by the Ottomans caused great concern both in the Muscovite State and in the countries of Western Europe, which intensified diplomatic activity among them in order to create an anti-Ottoman coalition. The anti-Ottoman mood was strengthened by the fact that the domination of the Ottomans in the South Caucasus and the progress towards the Caspian coast greatly hampered trade.

If we take into account the circumstance that for the Muscovite State in the 16th century, for the economic development of the country, the trade with the eastern countries was deemed of greatest importance in comparison with the trade with the western countries, the necessity of the Volga-Astrakhan highway for it will become clearer, and it could not abandon its interest so easily. This was because the goods brought into the Muscovite State from the East quite exceeded the goods from the West.

For its part, the political and economic interests of the Safavid State also coincided with Russia's interests in the issue of exploiting and using the Volga-Astrakhan shipping route. This is explained by the fact that, as a result of the use of the above-mentioned waterway, the main adversary of Iran - the Ottoman Empire - would be deprived of the significant income, provided by customs duties on Persian and Shirvan silk, the largest part of which was transiting the Ottoman territory to Aleppo and Damascus, and then going to Western Europe.

Thus, for Iran, which waged fierce battles against the Ottoman Empire in the 80s of the 16th century, the rapprochement with the Muscovite State seemed to be profitable, both from the economic and political point of view. So, during the mentioned period, Safavid Iran considered the Muscovite State as its ally.

The complicated situation forced the officials of the Iranian government to look for an ally. They took into account the negative attitude of the Muscovite State towards the Ottoman Empire, which was expressed by political and economic rivalry, and the choice fell to it. In 1586, an embassy was sent from Iran to Muscovite State. This embassy was commanded by Hadi Beg, a close person to Mohammad Khodabande (1578-1587) - Shah of Iran.

It should be noted that on the Astrakhan-Moscow road, the embassy of Hadi Beg was attacked by robbers; they robbed them and took away their things, including things sent from the Shah of Iran to King Theodore. When the King of Russia learned about this news, he ordered that the material loss of Hadi Beg and his suite members should be compensated thirtyfold, and the culprits should be severely punished. We think that this fact clearly shows that the Muscovite State attached great importance to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Iran.

It is worth noting that Shah Mohammad Khodabande of Iran, in exchange for his help against the Ottomans, offered the Russian King Feodor (1584-1598) two important strategic port cities of the Caspian Sea: Baku and Derbent (Daruband), which were in the hands of the Ottomans at that time. The Shah would bestow the above-mentioned cities to the Russian king, even in the case that only the Iranian army would liberate them without the help of the Russian army.

This proposal of the Shah turned out to be very attractive to the rulers of the Russian state. By taking possession of Derbent, a direct way to Georgia would be opened for the Iranian state. On top of that, there was the circumstance that in the 80s of the 16th century, the diplomatic relations between the Muscovite State and the Kingdom of Kakheti were

renewed again. The Muscovite State tried to protect the southern borders of its state, expand its spheres of influence, and strengthen trade and economic relations with the East by connection with Iran, Kakheti, and other peoples of the Caucasus. Kakheti needed the Russians' support and help to ensure its own security from foreign enemies.

We think that the prospect of bringing these locations of greatest economic and political importance into their sphere of influence hastened the representatives of the political circles of the Muscovite State to activate their foreign policy course towards the South and the East. According to the decision of the council of boyars, in the spring of 1588, an embassy was sent in response from Moscow to Iran under the command of Boris Vasilchikov. The main purpose of this Moscow embassy was to clarify the proposal given by the Shah of Iran about marching against the Ottomans together with the Muscovite State and the cession of Baku and Derbent.

During that period, namely in 1587, a military coup took place in Iran. Mohammad Khodabande was dethroned, and his own son Abbas I (1587-1629) became Shah of Iran. The young Shah of Iran, who began to pursue a cautious and prudent policy in relation to the Muscovite State, conveniently changed the proposal given by his father to King Feodor and gave his ambassadors a completely different project to take to Moscow, according to which the Russian army should attack Baku and Derbent, while the Iranian army would march to Shirvan. In case of victory, the Muscovite State would dominate the northern coast of the Caspian Sea, and Iran would dominate the southwestern coast. It turned out that the Russians had to occupy Baku and Derbent by their own forces. The Russian side was not ready for that.

Soon after these events, on March 21, 1590, an armistice was signed in Istanbul between Iran and the Ottomans, according to which Eastern Georgia, Eastern Armenia, all of Northern and Southern Azerbaijan (except Ardabil and Talish), Kurdistan, and part of Luristan remained to the Ottomans. As for Baku and Derbent, these cities remained still in Ottoman hands. This truce caused great dissatisfaction both in the Muscovite State and in Western European countries. Because of this, diplomatic relations between the Muscovite State and Safavid Iran were temporarily suspended.

After the above-mentioned truce, the Ottoman threat to European countries was created again. This fear was soon justified when, in 1593, the Ottomans started a war against Austria, and European countries turned out to be once again threatened by the Ottomans. In such circumstances, the European states became interested in Iran and Georgia again. At the same time, the Ottoman side was expressing its anxiety about Russian activation on the Caspian Sea, near Derbent.

Based on all of this, the authorities of the Muscovite State were forced to renew diplomatic negotiations with the country of the Safavids since Iran was the only power in the entire East that could be confronted by the Ottomans. Due to this, in 1594, King Feodor sent an embassy to Iran under the leadership of Andrey Zvenigorodsky. This embassy was tasked with taking care of the renewal of negotiations for establishing a military-political union with Iran. Also, the Russian ambassador had to find out what kind situation was in Iran and to what extent it would be possible to involve the Safavid State in the anti-Ottoman coalition, created by Europe.

It should be noted that the issue of Kakheti also was included in Zvenigorodsky's duties. The ambassador was obliged to help with every effort to take from Iran to Moscow

the hostage Prince of Kakheti Constantine, who was at the court of the Shah of Iran from his young age. The Russian ambassador had to convince the ruler of Iran that sending the prince of Kakheti to the king of the Muscovite State would be an unequivocal proof of loyalty and goodwill on the part of the Shah. The Muscovite State side declared the impossibility of a king's son of the Christian faith, to be a hostage in a Muslim country as the reason for such desire. With this action, the politicians of the Muscovite State tried to deprive the Shah of Iran of that powerful weapon - the Prince of Kakheti, who was in his hands. It was possible that Constantine, who was in the hands of the shah, would become a claimant to the royal throne of Kakheti, which did not suit either Kakheti or Moscow. However, it is known that this attempt of the Russian ambassador was unsuccessful.

In the 90s of the 16th century, an anti-Ottoman coalition project was developed in European countries. They wanted to involve Georgia and Iran in this coalition, whose monarchs immediately responded to this appeal.

As for the Georgian kings, they acted based on the situation to liberate and save the country. King Simon I of Kartli (1556-1569; 1578-1600) did not consider it obligatory to accept the terms of the 1590 armistice and surrender to the invaders. The Ottoman aggressors were forced to retreat and recognize the Christian Simon as the King of Kartli. But this was a temporary reconciliation. In 1598, King Simon renewed the war with the Ottomans. The King of Kakheti, Alexander, stopped paying tribute to the Ottomans. In 1599, King Simon liberated the city of Gori, but during the following battles, he was captured by the Ottomans. His deeds were continued by his successor, King George X (1600-1605), who led the battle of Kartli against the Ottomans. The king of Kakheti, Alexander II (1574-1601; 1602-1605), was again relying on the Muscovite State and often sending his ambassadors to the Russian capital. However, attempts of the Muscovite State to maintain its political position in the Caucasus with weapons ended in failure. To this was added the civil unrest that began in the Muscovite State, which the Shah of Iran took advantage of and staged a palace coup d'état in Kakheti. Shah Abbas, who was greatly worried about the rapprochement of the Kakheti Kingdom with Moscow, arranged for King Alexander (together with Prince George) to be killed by his own son, Constantine Batonishvili (Prince), in 1605. Constantine became king in Kakheti (1605). Soon, the Kakhetians rebelled against Constantine, who was killed in the same year. The political situation forced the ruler of Iran to make concessions and approve Teimuraz I as a king in Kakheti (King of Kakheti in 1606-1648, King of Kartli in 1625-1632) and Luarsab II (1606-1615) as a king in Kartli.

It should be noted that in 1604-1606, the exchange of ambassadors between Safavid Iran and Muscovite State was temporarily stopped, although it was soon renewed. So, even in the 17th century, the diplomatic relations between the Muscovite State and Safavid Iran continued again, where the issue of Georgia occupied an important place.

In the paper, we have discussed the sources and scientific literature in different languages, and as a result of comparing them, we have drawn our own opinions and conclusions.