

## ИСТОРИЯ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ И ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКИ

### Shirvān and its Role in the Russo-Safavid Trade and Diplomacy in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century

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**For citation:** Rybar L. Shirvān and its Role in the Russo-Safavid Trade and Diplomacy in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. History*, 2020, vol. 65, iss. 2, pp. 605–617. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu02.2020.216>

The article deals with trade role of Shirvān in the diplomacy between the Muscovite Rus' (or Russian Tsardom) and Safavid Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Shirvān as a historical and geographical area in the east of the South Caucasus (near The Caspian Sea) was a very important centre of international trade even in the earlier period. In 1538, Shirvān became a part of the Safavid Empire (as a border administrative entity — Beylerbeylik). Some important caravan routes led through the Shirvānian cities (Shamakhi, Baku, Darband). Merchants from Eastern Europe (predominantly from Muscovite Rus') came along these trade routes to Persia with their goods. In addition, Shirvān was also an important source of several commercial goods such as silk, various fabrics, oil, carpets and more. After the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates, the interest of the Muscovite Rus' in the South Caucasus regions (including Shirvān) and Safavid Persia intensified, which is apparent in the increase of diplomatic contacts between the Russian Tsar (or Muscovite Tsar) and Safavid Shah. The subject of these negotiations was mostly trade. When the Ottoman-Safavid war (1578–1590) broke out, the territory of Shirvān got under control of the Ottoman Empire. An international trade exchange across its territory was temporarily interrupted but the Russo-Safavid diplomacy continued, and this fact led to the intensification of diplomatic exchanges. Following the Russian sources (archival and published documents), I would like to show the key aspects of negotiations, in which Shirvān (especially such cities as Baku, Darband and Shamakhi) played a profound role in the diplomatic relationships between the Russian Tsar and Safavid Shah at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century.

*Keywords:* Shirvān, trade, diplomacy, Muscovite Rus', Safavid Empire, 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Ширван и его роль в русско-сефевидской торговле и дипломатии в XVI веке

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**Для цитирования:** *Rybar L. Shirvān and its Role in the Russo-Safavid trade and Diplomacy in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century // Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. История. 2020. Т. 65. Вып. 2. С. 605–617. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu02.2020.216>*

В статье рассматривается роль Ширвана в торговле и дипломатии между Московской Русью (Русским царством) и Сефевидской империей в XVI столетии. Ширван, как историко-географическая область на востоке Южного Кавказа (рядом с Каспийским морем), был очень важным центром международной торговли уже в более ранний период. В 1538 г. Ширван вошел в состав Сефевидской империи (в качестве пограничного административного района Бейлербейлик). Некоторые важные караванные маршруты вели через города Ширвана (Шемаха, Баку, Дербент). Торговцы из Восточной Европы (преимущественно из Московской Руси) по этим торговым путям приезжали со своими товарами в Сефевидскую Персию. Кроме того Ширван был важным источником таких коммерческих товаров, как шелк, различные ткани, масло, ковры и др. После завоевания Казанского и Астраханского ханств усилился интерес Московской Руси к регионам Южного Кавказа (включая Ширван) и Сефевидской Персии, что проявилось в расширении дипломатических контактов между русским (московским) царем и сефевидским шахом. Предметом этих переговоров была в основном торговля. Когда началась османо-сефевидская война (1578–1590), территория Ширвана попала под контроль Османской империи. Международный торговый обмен через ее территорию был временно прерван, но русско-сефевидские дипломатические контакты стали еще более интенсивными. На основании российских источников (архивных и опубликованных документов) в статье показаны ключевые аспекты дипломатических переговоров, в которых Ширван (особенно такие города, как Баку, Дербент и Шемаха) сыграл важную роль в отношениях между московским царем и сефевидским шахом в конце XVI в.

*Ключевые слова:* Ширван, торговля, дипломатия, Московская Русь, Сефевидская империя, XVI век.

The main purpose of the study is to show the strategic role of Shirvān in diplomatic and trade Russian-Persian relations in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The key archival resources for the study of this issue were archival documents from RSAAA (fund 77, Relations of Russia with Persia) and published sources on Russian-Persian relations (N. I. Veselovskii). In addition, some information can be obtained from The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles and reports and documents by representatives of the English Muscovy Company. Thanks to the privileges of the Tsar Ivan IV, they were able to travel through Russian territory to Persia in order to carry on trade. The question of the position and role of Shirvān in international trade and diplomatic relations (in the case of this study, the Russian-Persian relations) was solved primarily in the historical works of Azerbaijani (e. g. F. M. Aliev, A. Guseinov, G. Seidova)<sup>1</sup>, Russian (e. g. P. P. Bushev, A. P. Novoseltsev, A. Shpakovskii, I. S. Zevakin) and Iranian historians (e. g. M. A. Jamālzade, N. Falsafi,

<sup>1</sup> The works of Azerbaijani historians mostly deal with issue of Shirvān and its role in the Russian-Persian relations, but their interpretation was primarily focused on the strategic role of the territory, including contemporary borders of Azerbaijan (or Az. SSR) and Azerbaijan province in Iran. Shirvān's regional role, as a historical-geographical part (beylerbeylik) of the Safavid Empire, was not taken into consideration.

R. Ra'isnīyā). However, no particular emphasis has been placed on the role of Shirvān by any of these historiographies. The role of Shirvān as a historical and geographical region in the East of South Caucasus, has been presented only in the context of a broader interpretation of Russian-Persian diplomatic and trade relations. In contrast to this work, this article aims at analyzing the problems of the position of Shirvān in these relations in more detail and thus emphasizing its strategic role.

Since the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Shirvān<sup>2</sup> had attracted attention of more significant commercial and economic interests of Muscovite Rus'. The advantageous geographic location of Shirvān, the wealth of its export markets, and resources of raw materials played an important role<sup>3</sup>. Merchants from Moscow and other Russian cities headed to Persian and Transcaucasian areas more frequently and commenced importing Russian products or exporting precious oriental goods. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the trade between Muscovy and Safavid Persia became more regular. Exactly at that time Muscovy became a centralised state, bordering Caucasian and Transcaucasian areas directly, and through those — the oriental world. Muscovy's interest in the southern borders was increased by the threat of potential aggression of the Ottoman Empire and its ally — the Crimean Tatars, or the rulers of the southern khanates such as Astrakhan and Kazan. After the Russians had conquered these khanates in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century (the khanate of Kazan was conquered in 1552, and Astrakhan — in 1554), a direct route to the Caspian Sea was cleared. That led to a straightforward expansion of trade with the Caspian areas, Persia and through those — with India and distant China. This relates to the increased development of commercial and economic contacts with the Transcaucasian region, including Caucasian regions (such as Dagestan, Shirvān) and Persia, where at the time a powerful empire led by the Safavid dynasty was formed (from 1501).

In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Safavid Empire led frequent battles with the Ottoman Empire. The first military conflict occurred already during the reign of Shāh Ismā'īl I in 1514. The cause of this rivalry was, among other things, also Shirvān itself, which the Ottomans were attempting to dominate since it played an important strategic and commercial-economic role in the Transcaucasian area<sup>4</sup>. In 1555, Peace of Amasya was signed, which ended the Ottoman-Safavid wars for over 20 years. This temporary termination of Ottoman-Safavid rivalry in the Transcaucasian area also contributed to the development of Russo-Persian commercial contacts. In such situation, foreign caravan trade in Transcaucasia could develop more easily and successfully, and in the 1550–1570s its rising tendency was registered. The advancement of the Russian trade with the countries of the East led to an increase in goods production, volume and expansion of the variety of imported and exported goods. Russian merchants could acquire raw materials and products

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<sup>2</sup> According the definition of Encyclopaedia Iranica, Shirvān is the historical and geographical region of Eastern Transcaucasia (since 1994 part the independent Azerbaijan republic). *Bosworth C. E.* Šervān. Encyclopaedia Iranica. URL: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/servan> (accessed 01.01.2020). — Russian historians and orientalists V. V. Bartold and V. Minorskii approximately set them as follows: The Shirvān area is bordered by the Caspian Sea to the east. To the southwest by the Kura River, which separates it from the Mugan area, and to the north by the Caucasus (to the city of Darband). *Bartold V. V.* Raboty po istoricheskoi geografii. Moscow, 2002. P. 571–573. *Minorskii V. F.* Istoriiia Shirvana i Derbenda X–XI vekov. Moscow, 1963. P. 106–118.

<sup>3</sup> *Aliiev T. F.* K voprosu ob istoricheskoi geografii Shirvana v pervoi treti XVIII v. (po sochineniu I. G. Gerbera). Baku, 1989. No. 2. P. 39.

<sup>4</sup> For the Ottoman-Safavid War (1514–1555) see works by: *Savory R.* Iran Under The Safavids. Cambridge, 1980. P. 27–75.

from the East more conveniently and cheaply, and the export of their own goods became easier. Shirvān, as one these territories, was in the centre of the Russo-Eastern exchange of goods. Trade conducted through Shirvān and the territory of Muscovite Rus' had international significance as a large amount of goods of eastern and western production was transported through these countries both ways along the Europe — Muscovy — Caucasus — East route. Since 1538, Shirvan became officially part of the Safavid Empire as a new administrative unit — Beylerbeylik. This fact did not prevent Shirvān, its cities and merchants from playing an important role in the international trade. The region's strategic geographical location therefore significantly contributed to strengthening of mutual contacts of Russian commercial environment with the East and Safavid Persia<sup>5</sup>.

Already from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Muscovite Rus' expressed interest in Safavid Persia and Transcaucasia. Even before conquering the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, Muscovy had established direct diplomatic and commercial contacts with Safavid Persia. This is evidenced by the Safavid message to Muscovy in 1521, which resulted in the invitation of Russian military masters and the supply of firearms and armour for the military needs of the Safavid Shah<sup>6</sup>. It is unknown whether other trade was the subject of these negotiations, however, it is certain that goods were already being imported from Persia through Shirvān area to the Muscovy territory. According to an Azerbaijani historian A. Guseinov, almost all Russo-Safavid missions of envoys of this period were interested in improving commercial-economic relations<sup>7</sup>. It is confirmed by another message from 1544 of the Shirvān Beylerbeyi asking Ivan the Terrible to restore old privileges of Armenian merchants to trade with Muscovite Rus'<sup>8</sup>. Ivan IV responded positively to this request, and the trade with Muscovy continued. Initially, Russian merchants in the service of the Russian Tsar mainly pursued commercial interests in this area. In 1552–1553, just before the conquest of Kāzan, Muscovy had established new diplomatic contacts with Safavid Persia through Ambassador of Safavid Shāh Ṭāhmasp I called Seit Khosen (in Rus. Сеит Хосен)<sup>9</sup>. The content of these negotiations concerned free passage of messengers for both sides. It is possible to conclude that it was probably a trade permit too, as the merchants often travelled with foreign missions together with messengers and their caravans<sup>10</sup>. This confirms that the commercial contacts between Muscovy and Safavid Persia through Shirvān area were active already in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

More intensive trade occurred after the conquest of the mentioned khanates by Muscovy and after the termination of the Ottoman-Safavid military conflict. According to the report about sending a Tatar envoy to the tsar by the governor Ivan Cheremisnov (the first Muscovy governor of Astrakhan after its conquest) and Mikhailo Kolupaïev

<sup>5</sup> Azerbaijani historian G. Seidova noted that the Shirvān Beylerbeylik was a bridge between Muscovite Rus' and the Safavid Empire. *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva v XVII veke (po russkim istochnikam)*. Baku, 2004. P. 45.

<sup>6</sup> It was the first evidence of Russo-Persian diplomatic contacts collected from Russian archive materials. *Bushev P. P. Istoriiia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii russkogo i iranskogo gosudarstv v 1586–1612 gg. (po russkim arhivam)*. Moscow, 1976. P. 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Guseinov A. Azerbaidzhano-russkie otnosheniia XV–XVII vv.* Baku, 1963. P. 116.

<sup>8</sup> *Bushev P. P. Istoriiia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 40.

<sup>9</sup> *Karamzin N. M. Istoriiia gosudarstva Rosiiskago*. Vol. IX. St. Petersburg, 1834. Notes, P. 21.

<sup>10</sup> The routes of the ambassadors were often also commercial routes as diplomacy and foreign trade were two main forms of connection between the empires. In those times, a messenger and a merchant were in fact inseparable. A messenger was often a merchant and a merchant often a messenger. *Fekhner M. V. Torgovlia Russkogo gosudarstva so stranami Vostoka v XVI veke*. Moscow, 1956. P. 11.

in 1556 (or 1557), several merchants from the Caucasus traded in Astrakhan, including Shirvān merchants from Shamakhi and Darband<sup>11</sup>. In Russian documents of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Azerbaijani historian A. Guseinov often encounters statements that Russian towns were visited by “*gosti*”<sup>12</sup> from “*Shamakhy*”, “*Shamakhi*”, or Shamakhi’s merchants (“*Shamakhinsi*”, “*Shemakhetsi*”)<sup>13</sup>. Commercial contacts became more lively in the 1560s when representatives of the English Muscovy company penetrated into Shirvān area through the Russian territory. It was English merchants who left us reports about Russian-Shirvān commercial contacts and the presence of Russian merchants in Shirvān. In his report, an Englishman Anthony Jenkinson confirmed that in March 1562 before his second trip to Persia, there was also a Persian ambassador present at the court of the Russian Tsar<sup>14</sup> who probably arrived in Muscovy already in 1561. Jenkinson together with the Persian ambassador sailed down the Volga to Astrakhan and Safavid Persia, and as he mentions himself, during the journey they established “great friendship”<sup>15</sup>. This messenger however, probably was not an ambassador of the Safavid Shah, but rather Shirvān’s governor (Beylerbeyi) Abdullāh Khan Ustajlu (in Jenkinson’s notes — Obdolowcan)<sup>16</sup>, the Shah’s cousin, brother-in-law, and one of his most trusted emirs<sup>17</sup>. K. Meshkat claims that “Jenkinson thought of him as an independent ruler, possibly, because the governors of Shirvan continued to rule under the title Shirvanshah”<sup>18</sup>. In his notes, Jenkinson further mentioned that Abdullāh Khan sent his envoy, who returned from Moscow, with him to Qazvīn to the Safavid Shāh. It was thus the same envoy who returned from Muscovy with Jenkinson<sup>19</sup>. Presumably, his dignity gave him the right to send his own envoy to Moscow. The purpose of his visit (in Moscow) is unknown although from the events of the following years it is possible to presume that it was commerce. A year later, on 1 November 1563 (or 1564), another messenger from Abdullāh Khan arrived in Muscovy, probably together with the English. Members of this deputation were three ambassadors Kozemak, Sudalei and Arslan-aga carrying a letter from Abdullāh Khan, which, besides a polite and respectful greeting to the Russian Tsar, contained a request to open free trade for Shirvān merchants on Tsar’s territory<sup>20</sup>. This further fact confirms that Shirvān beylerbeyi Abdullāh Khan had a wide range of privileges in domestic and foreign politics and could send his own diplomatic mission to the Russian Tsar. Neither from the Nikon Chronicle, nor from other available resources can we learn how the mission ended. This is confirmed by the Russian historian P. P. Bushev<sup>21</sup>. However, other Russian and Azerbaijani historians

<sup>11</sup> Aliev F.M. *Azerbaidzhano-russkie otnosheniia (XV–XIX vv.)*. Baku, 1985. P. 26. *Lebedev A. N. Letopisets russkii (Moskovskaia letopis’)*. Chteniia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh. Vol. 3. Moscow, 1895. P. 71. *Shpakovskii A. J. Torgovlia Moskovskoi Rusi s Persiei v XVI–XVII vv.* Kiev, 1915. P. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Guests (in Rus. гости) — in Russian documents this term is used to describe Russian merchants abroad and merchants-foreigners as well.

<sup>13</sup> Guseinov A. *Azerbaidzhano-russkie otnosheniia XV–XVII vv.* P. 134.

<sup>14</sup> Hakluyt R. *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nations*. Vol. III. Edinburgh, 1886. P. 266.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 267.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. P. 269.

<sup>17</sup> Meshkat K. *The journey of Master Anthony Jenkinson to Persia (1562)* (thesis). Oslo, 2005. P. 68.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. P. 68.

<sup>19</sup> Hakluyt R. *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries*. P. 271.

<sup>20</sup> *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei. Dopolneniia k Nikonovskoi letopisi*. Book 13, no. 2. St. Petersburg, 1914. P. 371.

<sup>21</sup> Bushev P. P. *Istoriia posolstv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 42.

claim that from 1563 regular trade between Russian and Shirvān's merchants was secured by the contract with the Shamakhi Khan<sup>22</sup>; and merchants from Shamakhi and Darband gained a permit to trade in Russian cities (Astrakhan, Kazan, Muscovy, etc.)<sup>23</sup>. It was most likely the deal closed during the visit of the Shirvān messengers to Muscovy in 1563. Other English merchants confirm mutual trade between the Russian and the Shirvāni. In his notes from 1563, Thomas Alcock mentioned that Russian merchants were sending goods from Shamakhi towards the sea<sup>24</sup>. Three years later, another English envoy and merchant Arthur Edwards reported about Russian merchants in Shirvān. He wrote that Russian traders were outraged because of English commerce in Shirvān<sup>25</sup>. He also added that local inhabitants preferred the English to the Russians "because they are given to be drunkards"<sup>26</sup>. In the following letter, he mentioned that two ships sailed into Shirvān with goods and Russians aboard<sup>27</sup>. There was interest in trading with the Russians in Shirvān, which is confirmed again by the words of Arthur Edwards who wrote in his commercial report that it is necessary to import Russian goods to Shamakhi<sup>28</sup>. In addition, dispatching ambassadors of Shāh Tāhmasp I to the Russian Tsar with the goal of making an agreement about free trade of Russian and Persian merchants is dated to that period<sup>29</sup>. A little later Giles Fletcher noted that not only the English but also the Russians, based on the privilege from 1589, which Fletcher received from the Tsar, held the permit to trade with Darband and Shamakhi and to export silk and other products from the region on the Volga trade route<sup>30</sup>. The English, however, could not keep the commercial connection with Safavid Persia through the territory of Muscovite Rus' and Shirvān, to which the Russian merchants contributed significantly as they pressured the Russian Tsar to revoke the trade privileges of the English and their free transfer to Safavid Persia. English rivals deprived them of the profits generated by the trade in Shirvān, Persia and other eastern countries. These facts evidence that the Russians had a strong interest in maintaining their solid commercial positions in this area.

Port cities such as Baku, Darband and Niyazabad played a crucial role in the Russian trade in Shirvān. Another important centre was the city Shamakhi (seat of the Shirvān

<sup>22</sup> In Russian and Azerbaijani historiography, the term Shamakhi Khān may be found also as Shirvāni Beylerbey, or Shirvāni Khan; always referring to the same person. In Iranian historiography, this dignitary is more commonly referred to as Vāli-ye Shervān (The governor of Shirvān) or Beyglarbeygi Shervān. See: *Bushev P.P.* Istoriiā posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii. P.478; *Guseinov A.* Azerbaidzhano-russkie otnosheniia XV–XVII vv. P.239; *Falsafi N.* Siyāsāt-e khāreji-ye Irān dar dūr-ye Šafaviyeh. Tehrān, 1337. P.231; *Ra'īsniyā R.* Tārikh-e omūmi-ye manṭaqe-ye Shervān (dar ahd-e Shervānshāhiyān). Tehrān, 1380. P.284.

<sup>23</sup> *Kostomarov N.I.* Ocherk torgovli Moskovskogo gosudarstva v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh. St. Petersburg, 1862. P.43. — Another Russian historian J.S. Zevakin claims that the commercial contract allowing trade of Persian and Shirvāni merchants in Russia was concluded in 1566. *Zevakin J.S.* Diplomaticheskie i torgovye snosheniia Rossii s Iranom vo 2-i polovine XVI i v XVII veke. (Diss. kand. ist. nauk). Moscow. P.6, 125.

<sup>24</sup> *Hakluyt R.* Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries. P.285.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* P.294.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* P.294.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* P.300.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* P.294.

<sup>29</sup> *Guseinov A.* Azerbaidzhano-russkie otnosheniia XV–XVII vv. P.130.

<sup>30</sup> *Fletcher G.* Of The Russe Common Wealth // Russia At The Close The Sixteenth Century. London, 1856. P.96–97.

Beylerbeyi) followed by Shabran, Arrash and Shaki<sup>31</sup>. Russian merchants transported their goods through these cities to Persia. According to R. Matthee, mostly it was leather, metal objects such as arms, fur, wax, and tallow<sup>32</sup>. An important object of exports from Shirvān to Russian cities was mainly raw silk (also cotton, various fabrics, salt, oil, spices, rice, nuts and others)<sup>33</sup>.

There was more frequent exchange of diplomatic missions between the Russian Tsar and the Safavid Shāh<sup>34</sup>. Besides economic-commercial issues, political questions were discussed, where Shirvān played an important role, which is evident from the period documents.

Trade interests are inherently related to political interests, which in terms of Shirvān and its position in Russo-Safavid relations was demonstrated predominantly during the Ottoman-Safavid war in 1578–1590. After the death of Shāh Tāhmasp I in 1576, disputes over the Shāh's throne arose in the Safavid Empire, which greatly destabilised the country. Ottoman Sultan Murad III (1574–1595) took the opportunity, and in 1578 his troops invaded the South Caucasian region. Until 1589, they managed to occupy almost the whole territory of the South Caucasus, including Shirvān. According to Russian orientalist I. P. Petrushevskii, one of the main goals of the Ottoman Empire was to occupy the territory of Shirvān and the western coast of the Caspian Sea and thus dominate a vital trade artery, the Volga trade route<sup>35</sup>. The Ottomans managed it by conquering the South Caucasus including Shirvān, which significantly disrupted Russian commercial interests in the region<sup>36</sup>. Besides that, closing the routes through Shirvān complicated the advantageous trade connection of Muscovite Rus' with the Middle East<sup>37</sup>. The Ottomans even took several measures that were supposed to disrupt the trade between Safavid Persia and Muscovy<sup>38</sup>. With the help of Nogais, they also planned to attack the centre of trade at the Caspian Sea, Astrakhan<sup>39</sup>. That would have seriously threatened the southern borders of Muscovite Rus', which together with Safavid Persia, wanted to protect its position against the Ottomans at the Caspian Sea. On the other hand, Muscovite Rus' seemed a suitable

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<sup>31</sup> See more work by: *Rybár L. Širván a jeho úloha v európskom obchode (16–17 storočie)*. Acta Historica Posoniensia XXVI. Bratislava, 2014. P. 85–90.

<sup>32</sup> *Matthee R. P. The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran. Silk for Silver, 1600–1730*. Cambridge, 2000. P. 30.

<sup>33</sup> See more work by *Rybár L. Širván a jeho úloha v európskom obchode (16–17 storočie)*. P. 90–93.

<sup>34</sup> Russo-Safavid diplomatic relations were the sole interest of some Russian and Iranian historians, i.e. see works by *Bushev P. P. Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 478. *Novoseltsev A. P. Russko-iranskie politicheskie otnosheniia vo vtoroi polovine XVI v. // Mezhdunarodnye sviazi Rossii do XVII v.* Moscow, 1961. P. 444–461. *Binā A. Tārikh-e siyāsi va diplūmāsi-ye Īrān*. Jeld 1. Az Gonābād tā Torkamančāi (1243–1314 hejrī-ye qamarī). Tehrān, 1348. P. 6–17. *Jamālzade M. A. Tārikh-e Ravābaṭ-e Rūs va Īrān*. Tehrān 1372. P. 254.

<sup>35</sup> *Pigulevskaia N. B., Jakubovskii A. J., Petrushevskii I. P. Istoriia Irana s drevneishikh vremen do kontsa XVIII v.* Leningrad, 1958. P. 265.

<sup>36</sup> By occupying Shirvān the Ottomans not only took control over Russo-Safavid trade and decreased the importance of Astrakhan as the centre of trade with Safavid Persia and Central Asia, but they also gained a strategic position which allowed them to besiege Muscovite Rus' from the south and southeast. *Bushev P. P. Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 57.

<sup>37</sup> *Seidova G. Azerbaidzhan vo vzaimootnosheniakh Sefevidskoi imperii i Russkogo gosudarstva...* P. 38–39.

<sup>38</sup> The aim of the Ottomans was to disturb the Russo-Safavid trade and to establish a trade connection through the Caspian Sea with their ally Uzbek ruler. *Rakhmani A. A. O. Azerbaidzhan v kontse XVI i v XVII veke*. Baku, 1981. P. 48.

<sup>39</sup> *Bronevskii S. M. Istoricheskie vypiski o snosheniakh Rossii s Persiei, Gruziei i voobshche s gorskimi narodami v Kavkaze obitaiushchimi so vremen Ivana Vasil'evicha donyue*. St. Petersburg, 1996. P. 30.

ally candidate in the fight against the Ottomans<sup>40</sup>. In the battle against the Ottoman Empire the interests of both countries coincided which led to increased mutual diplomatic negotiations.

During the Ottoman-Safavid wars, Muscovy and Safavid Persia exchanged three diplomatic missions: Andi-bek's mission to Muscovy (1586–1588); envoy of G. B. Vasil'chikov to Persia (1588–1589) and Butak-bek's and Andi-bek's mission to Muscovy (1589–1590). The year 1586 can therefore be considered the beginning of regular Russo-Safavid diplomatic relations<sup>41</sup>. The main purpose of these diplomatic negotiations was the attempt of Safavid Persia to gain support of Muscovy in the battle against the Ottoman Empire. In addition, commerce became the subject of the meeting too. Shirvān constituted an important point of these negotiations, especially concerning the cities of Darband and Baku which were occupied by the Ottomans. Through his messenger Andi-bek, Persian Shāh Mohammad Khodābanda offered to surrender the cities of Darband and Baku to the Russian Tsar. It can be supported by several documents, for example, from the letter of Tsar Feodor I Ivanovich from 1588 addressed to Persian Shāh Abbās I through his messenger G. B. Vasil'chikov. It states that the Tsar received a messenger Andi-bek (envoy of Abbās' father) who announced to the Tsar "...that the father of Yours [Mohammad Khodābanda], brother of Ours, occupying Darband and Baku wanted to release them to Us, and We [Feodor Ivanovich] listened to the speech of the person of the father of Yours graciously <...><sup>42</sup> In another letter from the messenger G. B. Vasilchikov during a visit of the Safavid Shāh, I learn the following: "...Shāh Abbās has received me, a vassal of Yours [G. B. Vasil'chikov] with great mercy and with You, the ruler, in brotherly love, friendship and alliance wishes to stay and the cities of Baku and Darband to You, the ruler, will be surrendered and against all enemies of Yours, the ruler [Tsar Feodor Ivanovich] and of his [Shāh Abbās] wishes to side with You, lord..."<sup>43</sup> In so called "Stateiny spisok G. B. Vasil'chikova", it is mentioned in several places that cities of Baku and Darband and their resignation to the Russian Tsar were the subject of serious diplomatic negotiations between both parties<sup>44</sup>. Likewise, another document "Reports about the mission to Persia to Shāh Abbās by messenger G. B. Vasil'chikov..." refers to diplomatic negotiations between Muscovy and Safavid Persia. In several places of the document, it is written about the Shirvān's cities Darband and Baku<sup>45</sup>. Similarly to the previous documents, it is mentioned again that the Persian Shāh offered these cities to the Russian Tsar, and that the Tsar "...listened to the words of the messenger

<sup>40</sup> Iranian historian M. A. Jamālzade claims, that the Tsar of Muscovy could employ the Ottoman Empire and thereby distract its attention from the Safavid Empire. *Jamālzade M. A. Tārikh-e Ravābaṭ-e Rūs va Īrān*. P. 113.

<sup>41</sup> *Bushev P. P. Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 52. — Russian historian A. P. Novosel'tsev considers the beginning of the Russo-Persian diplomatic relations the period after conquering the Khanate of Kazan by the Russian Tsar in 1552. *Novosel'tsev A. P. Russko-iranskii politicheskie otnosheniia*. P. 448. Another Russian historian J. S. Zevakin considers the beginning of regular Russo-Persian relations the year 1588. *Zevakin J. S. Diplomatische i torgovye snosheniia Rossii s Iranom*. P. 125–126.

<sup>42</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (hereafter as RGADA). F. 77. Op. 3. No. 1/1588. L. 1 ob.; *Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii Moskovskoi Rusi s Persiei*. Vol. 1. St. Petersburg, 1890. P. 3–4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* P. 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii Moskovskoi Rusi s Persiei*. P. 24–25, 88, 96.

<sup>45</sup> RGADA. F. 77. Op. 1. No. 2/1588–1590. L. 1 ob., 4 ob., 7 ob., 12–12 ob., 13 ob., 18 ob.–19 ob., 20 ob.–25.

*attentively and received them...*<sup>46</sup> It is therefore evident from the archive documents that Tsar was interested in these cities. Other resources shed light on the wish of the Ottoman Empire to establish an ally relationship with Muscovy through the offer of the conquered cities to the Tsar. We are informed about it from the reports of Russian messengers Rodion Birkin and Peter Pivov operating in Georgia in October 1586. They recorded a discussion in which Qizilbash merchant Maamut claimed that Murad (Ottoman sultan) offered two occupied cities to the Russian Tsar in exchange for the alliance against the Safavid Shāh, which the Tsar rejected<sup>47</sup>. I assume that the Ottoman sultan wanted to offer strategic cities in Shirvān to the Tsar to win him over to his side.

Based on the documents during the first visit of Safavid messenger Andi-bek both abovementioned cities were to be surrendered to the Russian Tsar regardless of the fact who would succeed in liberating them from the Ottomans. The negotiations of the second visit of Safavid messengers Butak-bek and Andi-bek in years 1589–1590 are of a different nature. At that time, Shāh Mohammad Khodābanda was succeeded on the throne by his son Abbās I, who gradually changed his foreign-political attitude towards Muscovy<sup>48</sup>. His letter addressed to Feodor Ivanovich from 10 May 1590 states that “...in a letter of yours [Tsar] you wrote about Darband and Baku, so that We [Shāh] these two cities surrendered to You. And We will surrender these two cities Darband and Baku to Your majesty, so that these two cities will become Yours with happiness [in case the Tsar managed to occupy them]...”<sup>49</sup> The following diplomatic discussion states: “...so wrote the lord of Yours the great ruler [Tsar] to the lord of Ours the Shāh [Shāh] about two cities of Darband and Baku, for the lord of ours the Shāh would surrender them to the ruler of yours; and the lord of ours his majesty the Shāh surrenders these cities to your ruler; and these cities are Turkish now [in the hands of the Ottomans]; and the ruler of yours would send men of his towards these cities from his side; and the lord of ours will go from his side to the Shirvān land; and as soon as the ruler’s people take over Darband and Baku; and your people become the rulers of these cities; and the lord of ours will begin to acquire Shirvān at that time and as soon as the lord of ours the Shāh acquires it; and in Shirvān there will stay people of our ruler living and people of the ruler of yours in Darband and Baku will live and will be together [will live in alliance]...”<sup>50</sup> These words confirm that Safavid Shāh Abbās I offered the mentioned cities to the Russian Tsar Feodor if he conquered them on his own. In this case, the Russians would have been allowed to stay in Shirvān. Russian dyak Andrey Shchelkalov, however, indicated that Shāh’s messenger Andi-bek said in the previous message that the Shāh “...wishes to acquire the cities of Darband, Baku, Shamakhi, Shirvān from the Turks. And by acquiring these cities for our Tsar majesty the brother of yours Shāh majesty will surrender the cities

<sup>46</sup> RGADA. F.77. Op. 1. No. 2/1588–1590. L. 1 ob.

<sup>47</sup> Belokurov S.A. Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom. Vol.1. 1578–1613. Materialy, izvlechennye iz Moskovskogo glavnogo archiva Ministerstva inostrannykh del. Moscow, 1889. P.42.

<sup>48</sup> For more details on the issue of diplomatic negotiations with Muscovy during the reign of Abbās I and his promises to surrender the cities of Darband, Baku, and Shamakhy to Russia, see the study by Gusein F.A. K voprosu ob obeshchaniia shakha Abbasa I ustupit’ Moskovskomu gosudarstvu Derbent, Baku i Shemakhu // Voprosy istorii. 2010. No. 9. P.113–124.

<sup>49</sup> RGADA. F.77. Op. 2. No. 2/1590. L. 4 ob.; Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii. P.129.

<sup>50</sup> Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii. P.133.

of Darband and Baku...<sup>51</sup> The Safavid side, however, avoided confirming this promise<sup>52</sup>. The result of the negotiation was in the end the confirmation of the Shāh's promise to surrender the cities of Darband and Baku to the Russian Tsar, in exchange for which the Russian side pledged to protect the borders on the Caucasus, on the Terek River, and to the south from it, and from its right tributaries<sup>53</sup>. In this respect, it is necessary to add that a terrestrial trade route connecting the territories of the North Caucasus with Shirvān and Safavid Persia led across the Terek River. Control of this territory would provide Muscovy with a strong economic-commercial and power position in this area. In case of successful military actions against the Ottomans, Muscovy would have acquired the trade harbours of Darband and Baku by which it would have gained a significant control over the trade on the Caspian Sea and in South Caucasia. It is noticeable that Muscovy was keen to consolidate its position in this area<sup>54</sup>. However, in this period, Russian Tsardom weakened by the battles in the Livonian war (1558–1583) and in the Russo-Swedish war (1590–1593) was not able to conduct military or any other actions in the South Caucasian area. Moreover, already during the visit of Butak-bek and Andi-bek in Muscovy, the Safavid Shāh was conducting negotiations with the Ottoman side, the result of which was the Peace of Istanbul (1590) which ended the military conflict. According to this treaty, North Armenia, East Georgia and Shirvān were annexed to the Ottoman Empire<sup>55</sup>.

Following the conclusion of the Peace of Istanbul, the diplomatic communication between Muscovy and Safavid Persia continued, the evidence of which are further missions of their envoys<sup>56</sup>. The Shāh's court adopted a more careful policy in terms of its relations to Muscovy and Muscovy's interest in winning Dagestan, Darband and Baku. It is evidenced by the negotiations of Safavid messenger Kay who attended a diplomatic mission to Muscovy in 1591–1593. He untruthfully informed the Tsar's court about the continuation of the military operations of the Safavid Shāh against the Ottomans, and told that the Safavid Shah promised to the Russian Tsar for his help in the battle against the Ottomans not only the cities of Darband and Baku but even Shamakhi<sup>57</sup>. Subsequently, Persian Shāh Abbās I enticed Tsar's messenger A. D. Zvenigorodsky to persuade the Tsar to turn his military powers against the Ottomans in Shirvān, and promised to surrender the Shirvān cities in exchange<sup>58</sup>. The Shāh's goal was, however, only to provoke the Russian

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. P. 137, 145–146.

<sup>52</sup> The cause of such attitude was, according to P. P. Bushev, the fact that Persian Shāh Abbās searched for a solution for the difficult political-military position while attempting to suffer the least extensive territorial losses (*Bushev P. P. Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 145).

<sup>53</sup> Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Russians built several defensive fortresses on the Caucasian borders with Safavid Persia (Mozdok, Imorskii, Naurskii, Aristovo, Muratkhanov, and Kizliar) with the centre in Terek. Through this, they attempted to protect their southern borders (*Guseinov A. Azerbaidzhano-russkie otnosheniia XV–XVII vv.* P. 139–140).

<sup>54</sup> The Russian foreign politics of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century oriented towards the Caucasus and the Transcaucasian area was a precursor to the expansionist Russian politics which was executed a century later during the reign of Peter the Great (1682–1725).

<sup>55</sup> *Petrushevskii I. P. Azerbaidzhan v XVI–XVII vekakh // Sbornik statei po istorii Azerbaidzhana*. Moscow, 1949. No. 1. P. 274.

<sup>56</sup> For the issue of Russo-Persian missions in the years 1591–1604 refer to the work by: *Bushev P. P. Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 149–398.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. S. 177. — The idea of surrendering the city of Shamakhy to the Russian Tsar was discussed also during the diplomatic negotiations at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For details refer to: *Bushev P. P. Istoriia posol'stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*. P. 89–120.

<sup>58</sup> *Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii*. P. 273.

side to intervene against the Ottomans<sup>59</sup>. These cities remained the subject of promises from the Safavid side also during the following mission of Andi-bek and Ali Husrav in the years 1594–1596.

Preserved documents on this mission state: “...that the Shāh surrenders to the ruler [the Tsar] the cities that are now Turkish, Darband, and Shamakhi and Baku, and that the Shāh would surrender them if the ruler [the Tsar] helped him with (his) people...”<sup>60</sup> The messengers promised the Russian Tsar that in case of assistance in the battle against the Ottomans, the Shāh would be willing to surrender the mentioned cities to him. The response to the mission was a Tsar’s envoy to Safavid Persia led by V. V. Tufiakin and S. Iemeljanov (1597–1598), which ended tragically since all its leading members died during the journey. Among the mentioned documents there were so called “Dokonchalnye gramoty” (The Agreement Letters)<sup>61</sup>: the first one “*The agreement letter, the word of Shāh Abbās*”, and the second one “*The agreement letter, the word of the ruler*”<sup>62</sup>. In the letters, the surrendering of the cities of Darband, Baku, and Shamakhi to the Russian Tsar is discussed again<sup>63</sup>. From these documents it may be assumed that the role of the mentioned Russian mission was to conclude a military pact against the Ottomans; and compensation for military assistance to the Shāh would be the surrendering of the cities of Darband, Baku, and Shamakhi to the Russian side<sup>64</sup>. Due to the tragic end of the mentioned messengers, no diplomatic action occurred.

Shirvān’s cities were thus the subject of diplomatic negotiations between the Tsar’s and the Shāh’s courts also after the end of the Ottoman-Safavid war. The obvious interest of Muscovy in this area is evidenced by the Tsar’s letter from 1595 addressed directly to the Ottoman sultan, in which he acts as the protector of the local population. The letter states: “...And to the cities of your empire, Darband, Shamakhi and Baku and to other cities, which you, brother of ours, removed from the Shāh of Qizilbash, and to the people of yours, we do not command shortage, loss and inequality to act <...> with people who live in Darband and other cities to live in love and peace and tranquillity...”<sup>65</sup> I presume that at that time the Russian Tsar was already interested in controlling Shirvān and the Caspian area economically and by power. By dominating over these areas, Muscovy would have gained control over trade in the whole South Caucasian area and the Caspian Sea respectively. Nonetheless, Shāh Abbās I was well-aware of the strategic location of Shirvān. Besides that, by surrendering the mentioned cities to the Russian side, he would have lost an important source of revenue, which flowed from the trade and production of silk. It was for this reason too that the Safavid Shāh avoided confirming his promise about surrendering the mentioned Shirvān cities to Muscovy for its assistance in the battle against the Ottomans. Finally, the Safavid Shāh executed his plans to regain the lost territories in South

<sup>59</sup> Bushev P. P. Istoriiia posol’stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii. P. 258.

<sup>60</sup> Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii. P. 298–299.

<sup>61</sup> Dokonchalnaia gramota (or Dogovornaia gramota) — it is an agreement between two rulers in the Muscovite Rus’.

<sup>62</sup> Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii. P. 371–378. — The text of both “dokonchalnaia gramota” is, despite minor exceptions, almost identical, with the letter of the Russian Tsar being supplemented by the commitment of the Persian side to surrender the mentioned cities to Muscovy (Bushev P. P. Istoriiia posol’stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii. P. 286).

<sup>63</sup> Veselovskii N. I. Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii. P. 375.

<sup>64</sup> Bushev P. P. Istoriiia posol’stv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii. P. 299.

<sup>65</sup> Kozubskii E. I. Istoriiia Derbenta. Temir-Khan-Shura, 1906. P. 57.

Caucasia without the Russian assistance. In the war against the Ottomans in 1606–1607, he recovered Shirvān and its cities (Shamakhi, Darband, Baku and others)<sup>66</sup>. Shirvān thus became part of the Safavid Empire again. Therefore, since the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its strategic-commercial significance in the Russo-Safavid relations had been re-established and subsequently contributed to the further development of their mutual relations.

The study has shown that Shirvān and its cities played an important role in the trade relations between the Russian Empire and the Persian Empire as the main intersection of exchange of commodities where Russian merchants travelled for oriental goods. Moreover, since the 1880s, Shirvān had been one of the key subjects of diplomatic negotiations between the Russian Tsardom and Safavid Persia. This was particularly the case in cities such as Baku, Darband and Shamakhi, which Persia offered as compensation for eventual help from the Russian Tsardom in the war against the Ottomans. As a result, it is possible to conclude that Shirvān played an important trade and strategic role in the framework of Russian-Persian relations in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Further research may show what role Shirvān played (in Russian-Persian relations) in the subsequent period of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>66</sup> Smirnov N. A. *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze v XVI–XIX vekakh*. Moscow, 1958. P. 45.

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Статья поступила в редакцию 9 декабря 2019 г.

Рекомендована в печать 12 марта 2020 г.

Received: December 9, 2019

Accepted: March 12, 2020