UOT 94(479.24); UOT 930

NURIDA SULEYMANOVA
PhD Student in History, Baku State University
noor.suleiman@mail.ru

THE SILK TRADE OF THE SAFAVID STATE DURING THE REIGN OF SHAH ISMAIL AND SHAH TAHMASP IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE HISTORIOGRAPHY

DOI: https://doi.org/10.36719/2708-065X/106/252-258

In this article, the silk trade of the Azerbaijan Safavid state is discussed. The chronological framework of the work covers the period from the establishment of the Safavid state to the 80s of the 16th century. The main goal of writing this article is to determine the importance of the 16th century silk trade in the history of Azerbaijan. The article consists of an introduction, a main body and a conclusion. The introductory part provides general information about the economy of the Safavid state. This section also discusses how accurate information on the economy and silk trade is. The main body discusses the importance of silk trade during the period of Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp, during the Safavid-Ottoman wars, and the first English trade expeditions sent to the territory of the Safavid state. In the conclusion part, the relevance and scientific novelty of the conducted research, the importance of the study of the topic for the history of Azerbaijan are indicated.

Keywords: Safavids, Shah Ismail, Shah Tahmasp, history, trade, silk.

Introduction. The Azerbaijan Safavid State emerged as a tariqa, but over time it systematically went through phases and became a state in the early 16th century with its political organization.

It is important to understand the Safavid economy in general terms, which had a wide influence in areas such as Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, and the Eastern Anatolia region. However, the Safavid economy remains challenging to comprehend; it has been downplayed or even disregarded in comparison to neighboring India or the Ottoman Empire, or it has been overestimated in terms of output and worldwide significance. Its elusiveness stems in part from the fact that it is nearly impossible to speak of a single, integrated economy in a nation as vast, diverse, not easy to access, and unevenly supplied with natural resources as the Safavid dynasty.

The other aspect of the elusiveness is the confines of our understanding which is due to the overall lack of data that involves commercial activity. Our knowledge of the amount of trade flowing within the nation is quite limited, and the commodities that are imported and exported are essentially limited to the seventeenth century and only include the goods that are handled by the maritime companies. Therefore, naturally, there is not a vast amount of information available about the silk trade during the reign of Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp which lasted until the silk trade came to the fore in the political and economic life of the state, starting from the reign of Shah Abbas. However, all of this does not exclude us from making any kind of firm assumptions or statements regarding the Safavid economy. It only serves as a reminder that most claims will be qualitative and comparative rather than quantitative and that because difficult facts are so scattered and fragmentary, care must be used when handling the few that do exist.

The main body. The Safavid economy was a collection of regional economies, each centered around a provincial town, as several scholars have lately pointed out. Additionally, some commodities covered the whole economic spectrum. Silk was one. Grown in a variety of regions, including the Caspian provinces, Shirvan, Yazd, and Khurasan, it was exported in its raw form by land through Anatolia or Mesopotamia to the ports of the Levant, via the Persian Gulf around the Cape of Good Hope, via the Volga route to Moscow, and finally via the White Sea to Europe. Although silk was far less valuable and volumetric than bullion as an export good, it nonetheless covered a much larger geographic area than any other commodity [6, p.32-33].

Safavid silk is almost entirely associated with the Gilan province, located on the Caspian Sea coast. Mulberry and silkworm cultivation has been carried out in Gilan since ancient times. Gilan was the homeland of black mulberry trees and cocoons. Arab geographer Istahri mentions Lahijan, located in Gilan, as a silk production center in the 10th century [7, p.15]. Clavijo also mentions Gilan and Shemahi as important silk production centers in the 15th century [1, p.93].

Although raw silk was produced in many places, the most important regions for export to the West were the southern and western provinces of the Caspian Sea, especially Shirvan, Karabakh, and Gilan [3, p.61]. According to Dutch sources, the highest quality silk was produced in the city of Rasht, also on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The city of Farahabad was also an important raw silk production center. Apart from Gilan and Mazandaran, silk was also produced in the regions on the western coast of the Caspian Sea and, to a lesser extent, in the interior of Azerbaijan[1]. During the Safavid period, all of the silk exported to Europe was obtained from Gilan, Mazenderan, Gurgan, Ardabil, Shirvan, Shemahi, Karabakh, and Khorasan. Small-scale production was also carried out in cities such as Kirman, Tebes, Yazd, and the province of Khuzestan. The raw silk produced in different regions was recorded under various special names depending on its quality or other characteristics [6, p.37].

The port of Hormuz was one of the main trading routes used to deliver Safavid silk to markets throughout the world. This port, which connected the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea and beyond, was a major hub for marine trade and was located on the strategically important Strait of Hormuz. At Hormuz, traders from all over the world came together to exchange products, including valuables like silk. The importance of Hormuz in the Safavid silk trade is documented in historical accounts, they highlight the significance of Hormuz as a turning point in Azerbaijani silk exports during the Safavid era, and also they shed light on how Safavid traders used Hormuz as a route to enter profitable markets for their silk goods. Safavid dynasty, though becoming a stronger power, did not reap the advantages from this transit trade owing to the Portuguese control over the revenues obtained at Hurmuz [4, p.439].

Despite the gaps in our quantitative understanding, it is undeniable that the Safavid monarchy had a small, productive, and consumer market. The amount of goods exported was limited. Aside from bullion, the main export good from the nation was silk. The Safavids may have exported 5,000 or perhaps 6,000 bales of silk in a good year [6, p.34].

However, it is not possible to fully understand the silk trade without revealing the reasons behind the need for precious metals in the state's trade during the two-century rule of the Safavids (1502-1707). Since precious metals, especially silver, were coming largely from Anatolia thanks to the silk trade, it can be seen that the silk trade, weaving workshops, and the mint have been in a close relationship since the founding of the Safavid State. Interestingly, even the amount of gold and silver to be used in the brocaded fabrics produced in the first weaving workshops established by Shah Ismail (1502-1524) in the 16th century was determined at the mint. In this period, while the mint was an institution that managed the production of these metal threads as well as the printing of money, weaving workshops were production places determined by the state where silk weaving was strictly controlled.

Raw silk quickly became one of the products marketed to Europe via the Near East and the Indian Ocean mainly beginning from the end of the 16th century. The inadequacy of domestic production in response to the raw material needs of European weaving looms, whose number has increased since the 14th century, has made it necessary for most European countries to turn to new and abundant raw silk resources such as the resources of the Safavid state. As can be seen from here, the supply-demand relationship is very effective in this rise in raw silk. Instead of buying silk fabric, producing domestic fabric with cheaper raw silk and selling these fabrics at high prices has been seen as an extremely profitable business. As a place where quality silk was produced, the land of the Safavid state became the focal point of foreign state merchants [6, p.24].

In addition to the silk trade, during the reign of Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp, the economy of the Safavid state was based on agriculture and animal husbandry, similar to the economic life of

[1] *In fact, all the used academic literature for this article mentions Safavid state as an Iranian state.*

many states of that period. In addition, the economy related to trade and crafts developed in Safavid cities, similar to Ottoman cities. It is important that the animal husbandry sector in the Safavid Empire was generally in the hands of the nomadic Turkmen population, as it is similar to that in the Ottoman Empire [8, p.184].

The first Safavid kings supported the textile and weaving industry as they should, Shah Ismail encouraged the production of silk and cotton fabrics, established new industrial centers, and expanded trade with Turkey, India, and China. Safavid weaving workshops were first established by Shah Ismail in the 16th century [7, p.20]. However, before these new workshops could be operated to a large extent, they were exposed to a great disadvantage for a century due to intense conflicts with the Ottomans and the seizure of control of the silk production regions by the Ottomans. However, there was still a solid domestic market in the Safavid land in the XVI and XVII centuries. Many Azerbaijani cities were famous for silk weaving. In Azerbaijan, silk was used as furnishing material and clothing by courtiers and wealthy people.

The luxurious brocades and silks were all for domestic consumption. A silk turban was a traditional and respected gift from the shah to foreign visitors. The clothes of wealthy Azebaijanians were made of silk and cotton. In both Azerbaijan and the Ottoman Empire, cotton was added to silk clothing. Archaeological findings show that the twelve-piece Safavid scarlet börk was made of cotton reinforcement wrapped in red silk. This silk was probably dyed with madder, which was grown only in the Ardabil sect. Fabrics were extremely important in the Safavid palace, as in the Ottomans. Performing a ceremony or show of power with silk clothing and fabrics was also part of the Safavid palace tradition. Shah Tahmasp used to change his caftan fifty times a day as his official attire. When he died, his wardrobe contained 30,000 silk garments, 800 of which were coat-style, including turban fabrics, and two hundred loads of silk. In addition to all these, silk and silk fabrics could also be given as bride price [7, p.20-21]. Shah Tahmasp might be able to take control of trade, especially of silk, but he was not a merchant. It was reported by the English merchants that " the Shah never, and will not now, take textiles into his hoard. His entire trade consists of raw silk, which he sells to Turks and Armenians for a profit, as well as to other people who would otherwise purchase it [5, p.11; 5, p.433].

Now, looking back at the history we can see that, since the establishment of the Safavid state, the Silk Road remained far from forming a whole as the roads passing through Transoxiana and Central Asia were closed by the Uzbeks and the roads passing through the North of the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean were closed by the Ottomans. The land trade route passing through Asia Minor was also in the hands of the Ottomans. The establishment of the Safavid State in 1501 caused intermittent wars that disrupted the Anatolian-Azerbaijani trade. The Safavid Empire struggled politically with the Ottoman Empire in many areas. It is an important issue to consider today that these struggles have more than one political reason, but naturally, they also have economic bases. The Ottomans captured Tabriz in 1514. This major political turning point led to the beginning of the Ottoman Empire's control of both the silk production regions on the Caspian coast and the silk trade in Azerbaijan for almost a century, resulting in extensive profits for the Ottomans. Although smaller silk-producing regions such as Kashan, Yazd, Shiraz, and Khorasan were not subject to Ottoman influence during this period, Azerbaijani merchants had problems supplying silk in these regions due to the Ottomans [7, p.31].

When Yavuz Sultan Selim banned trade with the Safavids in 1516, he aimed to deal a blow to the economic situation of the mentioned state. This situation could have prevented the coin from leaving the Ottoman Empire [2, p.323]. Since the Ottomans closed the western part of the trade route, India became a major export point for Safavid merchants [7, p.31]. customs revenues, but also the silk industry in the Ottoman cities was damaged. For this reason, Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) immediately lifted the embargo At first, the lifting of the embargo was a positive development for the Safavid economy and Ottoman economies. The structural basis for the development of the Ottoman and Safavid economies was the financial resources obtained as a result of Europe's demand for Azerbaijani silk. Since both states needed this demand, Azerbaijani silk continued to be transported to Europe from major markets such as Aleppo, Bursa, and Izmir, even during periods of em-

bargo and war [2, p.323]. With the removal of the embargo, the Safavids turned to the production and trade of silk. Shah Tahmasp transferred the capital to Qazvin in 1548 due to Ottoman pressure. Thus, Qazvin and Isfahan, as the collection point of silk and the capital, came to the fore as the centers of the silk trade. Just as the political center of the state shifted to the southeast in the second half of the 16th century due to Ottoman pressure, the silk trade centers also experienced a similar shift [7, p.31].

The foundation of international trade, raw silk exports, was essential to the recovery of the economy. Following the Ottoman conquests, ties with England provided a chance to restart the silk trade. The "king" of Shirvan, Shah Tahmasp, treated the English traveler Jenkinson with such reverence on his trip to Safavid territory in 1563 that Jenkinson spent over a week at his court, conducting negotiations that were beneficial to England. Abdullah Khan granted the English traders several special advantages through an edict. Customs duties were also eliminated for the English. Officials from the state who disobeyed this order would face severe penalties. The palace trade was also regulated by Abdullah Khan's directive, which said that the treasurer was to accept any products brought by the English merchants or their representatives and pay for them with cash or in raw silk equivalent to the value of the goods [9].

Raising its anchor at Shabran, the English ship set sail for the Volga in April of 1563, carrying spices, rare jewels, and raw silk for sale in London and other English cities. Jenkinson seized rare silk, jewels, and other priceless items for the Moscow Great Knyaz on Ivan IV's orders. He stated that His Majesty was quite pleased when he turned in the diamonds and silk that he had purchased in Azerbaijan to the Treasury on August 20, 1563. As a result, trade links were established between England and Azerbaijan as a result of the first trading mission, which took place in 1561–1563. At Shamakha, the foundation for an English trading post had been laid. English merchants with liberal commercial privileges began to pour into Shirvan in greater numbers [9].

The Muscovy company attempted to deepen trade ties with Azerbaijan while making a substantial profit from the sale of rare and colorful silk cloth, jewels, spices, gold lace, satin, and other eastern commodities in London's marketplaces. That is why a third trading expedition was sent straight to the shores of the Caspian Sea as soon as the second one (1563–1565) concluded. Richard Johnson, Alexander Kitchin, and Arthur Edwards led this trading expedition, which took place between 1565 and 1567 [9].

Edwards wrote a third letter to England about his visit to the Safavid Palace. He wrote it in Astrakhan, while on his way back after completing his trip. In this document, written on 16 June 1567, he quoted from Shah Tahmasp’s decree afforded to the English merchants. He listed the privileges that represented initiatives by the Safavids, prevented from trading in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, and the Indian Ocean, to export raw silk, which was the country’s main source of wealth, to Europe via trading relations with the English merchants. Edwards openly declared the English trading company’s real purpose regarding Azerbaijan - they planned to monopolize the raw silk trade: I have no doubt that very soon we will become a big company in the trade of raw silk, silk cloth, spices, and dyeing materials, as well as other goods here [9].

In his account of the nation's international trade, Edwards enumerated the goods that were transported to that renowned trading center and stated that raw silk served as a means of exchange in trade relationships with countries in the West. He described the Safavid state's ability for international trade and expressed doubt that the English would be able to purchase all of the silk it exported. The traveler comes back to the subject of buying silk that is "first hand." He hoped he had more money so he could purchase silk at a discount from the peasants. He was envious of the Turkish traders, who were England's primary competitors in the trade and the primary buyers of Azerbaijani silk [9].

Overall, in the reign of Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp when precious metal shortages emerged, some export bans were re-enforced to prevent silver from escaping into Safavid lands, silk production and export did not stop, its source and direction changed. Azerbaijanian silk rivaled China in terms of quality and availability. While the Safavid rulers encouraged silk production and

export within the country, silk merchants began to look for other short and safe routes to the west, south and India [2, p.323]

However, the death of Shah Tahmasp caused internal disorders in Azerbaijan, which the Turks exploited to seize control of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Shirvan, Luristan, and portions of Gilan. By signing a pact with the young monarch Shah Abbas in 1590, the Ottomans were able to solidify their grip over the silk-producing regions and the major ports on the Caspian. Turkish and Russian routes then competed as long as Azerbaijani silk was in demand, which persisted until the latter half of the 18th century [4, p.436].

The conclusion. In general, a huge amount of academic literature that is written in English mentions the Safavid state as an Iranian state, for this reason, it is crucial to use the literature in the light of objectivity by not distorting the historical fact, which certainly proves that Safavid state is an Azerbaijani state despite all the falsified information. In conclusion, despite recurrent battles between the Safavid and Ottoman empires throughout the 16th century, Azerbaijan's external trade remained. The principal export from Azerbaijan was silk, which was shipped in large quantities to Turkey, where it was either consumed by the country's Bursa-based silk industry or bought by Venetian traders for sale in Europe. The primary weaving hubs of Yazd, Kashan, and Kirman likewise derived their raw materials from the silk of Azerbaijan's northern districts. Trade to and from Central Asia declined and did not pick up again until the early 1700s.

English traders brought a new trading force to the Safavid economy between 1560 and 1580, which was an interesting development. However, English traders would not have had the increased Venetian supplies of silver money to pay for silk imports if cloth exports had not occurred.

In general, we can say that Safavid silk was relatively expensive, uneven in quality, and difficult to procure given the distances involved, it was unreliable and, as such, simply could not compete with silk from Bengal.

Finally, a solid domestic market still existed in Azerbaijan Safavid state in the XVI and XVII centuries. Many Azerbaijanian cities were famous for silk weaving [7, p.20]. It was only in the later seventeenth century that the silk trade turned into a substantial export commodity, only in the 17th century did silk become the most important eastern import product.

LITERATURE

1. De Clavijo, Ruy Gonzales, Narrative of The Embassy of Ruy Gonzales De Clavijo To The Court Of Timour At Semerkand 1403-1406, Translated By Clements R. Markam, London: The Hakluyt Society, 1859 – 200 pp.
2. Floor W, Clawson P. Safavid Iran's search for silver and gold. International Journal of Middle East Studies. 2000 Aug;32(3) – 345-68 pp.
3. Herzig EM. The volume of Iranian raw silk exports in the Safavid period. Iranian Studies. Vol.25, No. 1/ 2 The Carpets and Textiles of Iran: New Perspectives in Research 1992 – 61-79 pp.
4. Jackson P, Lockhart L, editors. The Cambridge History of Iran (vol 6) cambridge university press, 1986 – 1120 pp.
5. Jenkinson A. Early voyages and travels to Russia and Persia. Hakluyt Society, 1886 – 176 pp.
6. Matthee RP. The politics of trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for silver, 1600-1730. Cambridge University Press; 1999 – 290 pp.
7. Mccabe, Ina Baghdiantz, The Shahs Silk For Europe's Silver, The Eurasian Trade Of Julfa Armenians ên Safavid Iran And India (1530-1750)î, University of Pennysylvania, Armenian Text and Studies, Number:15, Scholar Press, Atlanta, Georgia: 1999. – 414 pp.
8. Savory R. Iran under the Safavids. Cambridge Univ. Press; 1980 – 288 pp.
9. The first English traders in Azerbaijan. - http://www.visions.az/en/news/328/c749315/ [14.05.2024].

NURİDƏ SÜLEYMANOVA
Bakı Dövlət Universitetinin doktorantı

ŞAH İSMAYIL VƏ ŞAH TƏHMASİBİN DÖVRÜNDƏ SƏFƏVİ DÖVLƏTİNİN İPƏK TİCARƏTİ İNGİLİSDİLLİ TARİXŞÜNASLIQDA

Məqalədə Azərbaycan Səfəvi dövlətinin ipək ticarətindən bəhs olunur. İşin xronoloji çərçivəsi Səfəvi dövlətinin yaranmasından XVI əsrin 80-ci illərinə qədərki dövr əhatə edir. Səfəvi dövlətinin iki qüdrətli hökmdarı olan Şah İsmayıl və Şah Təhmasibin dövründə Səfəvi dövlətinin ipək ticarəti təhvil edilərkən yalnızca ingilisdilli ədəbiyyatlardan istifadə olunmuşdur.

Şah Abbasın ipək ticarəti haqqında yerli və xarici mənbələrdən zəngin məlumatlar olmasına rəğmən, Şah İsmayıl və Şah Təhmasib dövrünə aid ipək ticarətiylə bağlı məlumatlar ya azdır, ya da Səfəvilər dövlətindən İran deyə bəhs edilir. Elmi işin yazılmasında qarşıya qoyulan əsas məqsəd, XVI əsr ipək ticarətinin Azərbaycan tarixindəki yerini müəyyənləşdirməkdir. Quruluşuna görə məqalə, giriş hissəsindən, əsas mətndən və nəticədən ibarətdir. Giriş hissədə Səfəvilər dövlətinin iqtisadiyyatı haqqında ümumi məlumat verilir. Həmçinin bu hissədə, iqtisadiyyata və ipək ticarətinə dair məlumatların nə dərəcə dəqiq olması məsələsi də müzakirə olunur. Əsas mətndə beynəlxalq ticarətdə Səfəvilər dövlətinin rolu, Səfəvi ipək ticarətinin əsas məskənləri, ipəyin Səfəvilər dövləti tarixində və beynəlxalq ticarətdə rolu müzakirə olunur. Xüsusilə Şah İsmayıl və Şah Təhmasibin dövründə ipək ticarətinin önəmindən, Səfəvi-Osmanlı müharibələri dövründəki ticarətdən, Səfəvilər dövləti ərazisinə göndərilən ilk ingilis ticarət ekspedisiyalarından bəhs olunur. Nəticə hissəsində aparılan tədqiqatın aktuallığı və elmi yeniliyi, şumer tarixinin ətraflı öyrənilməsinin əhəmiyyəti göstərilmişdir.

Açar sözlər: Səfəvilər, Şah İsmayıl, Şah Təhmasib, tarix, ticarət, ipək.

НУРИДА СУЛЕЙМАНОВА
Докторант Бакинского государственного университета

ТОРГОВЛЯ ШЁЛКОМ В ГОСУДАРСТВЕ СЕФЕВИДОВ ВО ВРЕМЕНА ПРАВЛЕНИЯ ШАХА ИСМАИЛА И ШАХА ТАХМАСИБА В АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНОЙ ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ

В этом научном труде рассматривается торговля шёлком Азербайджанского государства Сефевидов. Хронологические рамки работы охватывают период от основания государства Сефевидов до 80-х годов XVI века. При освещении Сефевидской торговли шёлком во времена двух могущественных правителей государства Сефевидов шаха Исмаила и шаха Тахмасиба использовалась только англоязычная литература.

Хотя существует множество сведений о торговле шёлком шахом Аббасом в отчественных и зарубежных источниках, информация о торговле шёлком шахом Исмаилом и шахом Тахмасибом носит ограниченный характер, а государство Сефевидов упоминается как Иран. Основная цель написания научной работы – определить место торговли шёлком XVI века в истории Азербайджана. По своей структуре статья состоит из введения, основного содержания и заключения. В вводной части даются общие сведения об экономике государства Сефевидов. В этом разделе также анализируется, насколько точна информация об экономике и торговле шелком. В основном тексте рассматривается роль Сефевидского государства в международной торговле, основные центры Сефевидской торговли шёлком, роль шёлка в истории Сефевидского государства и международной торговли. Особо определено значение торговли шёлком в период правлений шаха Исмаила и шаха Тахмасиба, торговля в период сефевидско-османских войн, а также первых английских торговых экспедиций, отправленных на тер-

риторию государства Сефевидов. В заключительной части показаны актуальность и научная новизна проведённого исследования, важность детального изучения этой стороны истории государства Сефевидов.

Ключевые слова: Сефевиды, Шах Исмаил, шах Тахмасиб, история, торговля, шелк.

Məqalənin redaksiyaya daxil olduğu tarix: 14 may 2024-cü il.
Məqalənin çapa qəbul olunma tarixi: 15 oktyabr 2024-cü il.
Rəyçilər: t.ü.f.d. Elvira Lətifova, t.e.d. Anar İsgəndərov.