

TRADE DIPLOMACY AND SOUTH CAUCASUS: COMMERCE AS A PATH TO DIALOGUE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

The study attempts to present the role which the South Caucasus region played in the difficult interweaving of diplomacy and trade in the 15th-18th centuries, to study and present the trade interest of European states, and to show how trade facilitated diplomacy. The choice of chronological frames is not a coincidence, and they include the period from the 15th to 18th centuries, that is from the moment of European states' interest in both Iran and the South Caucasus region, and, respectively, until the Russian domination in the region in the early 19th century. The second half of the 15th century and approximately the beginning of the 16th century can be characterized by the growing interest of Italian cities and Italian merchants, a period when the Venetian merchants and diplomats Giosafat Barbaro and Caterino Zeno, anonymous Italian merchant Giovan Maria Angiogello, and later Vincente d'Alessandri and others passed us valuable messages on the economic life and political situation in the region. Caterino Zeno was an ambassador from Uzun Hasan to various Christian kings and princes, including Poland and Hungary, encouraging them to take up arms against the Ottomans. Jozafat Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini were sent from Venice, but no argument could induce the monarch Aq-Qouyunlu to wage another war against the Ottoman Turks [1]. On January 6, twenty months after Caterino's departure, famous Venetian merchant and diplomat Giosafat Barbaro was appointed as ambassador to Persia, who was sent with gifts and arms to Uzun Hasan, namely six huge siege guns, arquebuses and field guns in great quantity, powder and other ammunition, as well as men skilled in artillery [2]. Another Italian traveler named Giovan Maria Angiolello told that he served Mustafa, son of Mahomet II, the Great Turk, and that he participated in a battle with the same Great Turk, in which he was defeated by the army of Uzun Hasan (Usun Cassano) on islands in the Euphrates riverbed [3]. Italian

merchants were the first to gain extensive rights and guarantees in the Ottoman Empire in the framework of Capitulations (**achtiname** or **ahidnâme**), and later on the same practice began to be applied by the rest of the European countries, one of which was France in the 30s of the 16th century.

Since this period, a very interesting approach has been observed in connection with diplomatic missions and establishing contacts in the sense that people from the merchant environment are chosen as ambassadors and envoys, and a trader-diplomat appears in the person of the ambassador. In this respect, the study of the 16-17th centuries is of particular interest when such a scheme for conducting diplomacy and promoting trade interests continues to develop and operate everywhere both on the European and on the “Eastern” side. In the 16th century, from our point of view, the same diplomacy of England is of great interest, which, as part of the search and development of new trade routes and markets, showed great interest in Safavid Iran, and in trade routes, in local goods, and in this regard a huge role was played by the South Caucasus which connected the East with Russia by trade routes, through which the British had already established contacts, and with Europe. The South Caucasus presented an opportunity to establish a waterway through the Muscovy and the Caspian Sea to Iran, India and China [10].

In connection with the foregoing, the personality and activities of Englishman Anthony Jenkinson, who embodied the merger of a major merchant and diplomat, are of great interest. After a successful visit to the Moscow kingdom, Jenkinson was given special orders by the English Queen Elizabeth Tudor, and he had to try to find land and sea routes to China and Iran in every possible way [11].

Later, in 1561, as part of his second visit to the Moscow kingdom, Jenkinson went to Iran, and the road, of course, was laid through the South Caucasus, which was famous for its sericulture regions in Shirvan, Kakheti, Karabakh, among others, and it was raw silk that was especially valuable and the most expensive commodity, which attracted the interest of European merchants. Jenkinson became the first Englishman who landed in Derbent; he would then continue his journey from there, heading to Shabran, Shamakhi and later to Ardabil and Qazvin [12].

Here Jenkinson, during a reception with the governor of Shah Tahmasp, Abdullah Khan, demonstrated his skills as a diplomat. He explained to Abdullah Khan that trade between England and Iran was mutually beneficial in that the same raw silk that was exported from the possessions of Tahmasp was exchanged by Venetian merchants for their goods and traded on the territory of

Ottoman Turkey on favorable terms. Yet if English merchants had the same benefits in Iran that the Venetians had in Turkey, then there would be unprecedented trade in the Shah's possessions, and there would be great benefits to both sides. In addition, it would have beaten the economic interests of Ottoman Turkey, which during the 16-17th centuries was the main rival of Iran in the East and at the same time that of the Venetians. Already during the negotiations with Shah Tahmasp, Jenkinson personally embodied this fusion of trade and diplomacy, declaring that he was sent from Empress Elizabeth to negotiate friendship, that is, to establish diplomatic contacts, and to enable free trade. As a skillful diplomat, Jenkinson also played his cards with regard to the Portuguese. He himself admitted that, knowing in advance about the Shah's plans to fight the Portuguese because of dominance over Ormuz, Jenkinson assured the Shah that England was at enmity with the Portuguese, and, apparently, the image of a common enemy should have contributed to the establishment of relations. It is also important here that England was so interested in establishing contacts and in developing trade that she also sent a letter to Tahmasp, which Jenkinson was supposed to convey to the Shah. In addition, the aforementioned Abdullah Khan Ustajlu agreed to grant Jenkinson and English merchants trade benefits and the right to trade on the territory of Shirvan. As a result, Jenkinson completed the job with success, and would more than once go to the region with a diplomatic mission. Twice, in 1563 and 1566, Shah Tahmasp granted trade licenses, privileges and rights to English merchants. Jenkinson's successful policy contributed to the fact that a number of major English merchants - Richard Johnson, Alexander Kitchin, Arthur Edwards, Thomas Banister, Geoffrey Ducket and others - began to visit Iran and develop the market, and soon a list of goods were to be imported to Iran from England, for example, karazeya, tin, copper utensils, copper,, and most importantly, the goods in which the British themselves were interested, primarily raw silk, sulfur, pepper, ginger, cloves, alum, rice, nuts, yew tree, etc. [13].

Jenkinson's image as a merchant and diplomat, and a successful policymaker, embodied the success of commercial diplomacy. This further emphasized the great role that merchants could play in the conduct of diplomacy, and vice versa, the way diplomacy could influence the development of trade. It is interesting to note that in his memoirs Jenkinson himself reveals the entire essence of commercial diplomacy, telling how he prepared his agent, who was supposed to go to the Georgian king, to listen to him and try to allegedly help him against the Ottomans and Safavids. Jenkinson openly writes:

"I opened my thought to him - to get from the Georgian king the free passage of our merchants and trade in his possessions" [14].

Until the reign of Murad III (1574-1595) the English had been altogether strangers to Turkey, but in 1579 three merchants were sent to Constantinople - William Harebone, Edward Ellis; and Richard Staple - to spy out the land, as it were, and, if possible, to obtain the same social and commercial privileges that other nations enjoyed for English merchants.

The first of the Company's ships to trade with the Levant was sent out in 1582. It was called The Great Susan, and William Harebone, the first ambassador from England to the Ottoman Porte, was on board. Edward Barton was the first resident ambassador in Constantinople. Mr. Henry Lello was appointed to succeed E . Barton.

In the State Papers, January 31, 1599 , just a month before Tomas Dallam set out on his voyage, the following entry was made: "A great and curious present is going to the Grand Turk , which will scandalise other nations, especially the Germans." This great and curious present was the organ which Dallam had built, and which he was about to take out in person [15].

In 1669 John Covel was appointed as chaplain to the ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Daniel Harvey, by the Levant Company, and Charles II gave him a dispensation to go to Constantinople and hold his Fellowship at the same time [16]. It is significant that it was through these ambassadors that the commercial and political alliance between England and the Ottoman Empire was ensured, a tradition confirmed by Jenkinson.

After the successful policy of the British, the essence of conducting commercial diplomacy was quickly grasped by other countries, at the end of the 16th, and during the 17th century, an increasing interest by European states was noticed, which also sought to establish diplomatic relations with the Safavid state on the one hand, which especially intensified under Shah Abbas I, and on the other hand, of course, to participate in transit trade, in the silk trade, which went precisely through the South Caucasus. So, the interests of the Habsburgs, that is, in Spain, and later (1603-1612) in Iran were represented by Antonio de Gouvea [17], who went on to become the vicar of the Catholic Armenians in Isfahan; later in 1617-1619, Don Garcia de Silva Figueroa [18] was at the court of Shah Abbas I on a diplomatic mission from the Spanish royal court. On the French side in Iran, trader and skillful diplomat Jean Baptiste Tavernier acted quite successfully in the 30s [19]. Soon, in 1635-36, the German principalities also joined this "race"; in 1636 Frederick III Duke of Holstein-Gottorp sent Adam Olearius to the region, whose task was to seize the silk trade [20]. From

the Polish side, the diplomatic mission was carried out by Jersey Ilich as the main ambassador, who represented the interests of the Polish king Vladislav IV in the 30-40s, and later, in the 50s, Bodgan Gurgecki, also known as Bohtam beg, who tried to promote the development of economic ties among Safavid Iran, Poland and Russia. Gurgecki also had plans to build an anti-Ottoman alliance. Several decades later, in 1679-80, 1683-84, and 1697-1700, Sweden showed its interests; the interests of Sweden were represented here by Ludwig Fabritius, a skillful diplomat of Charles XI and XII. His task was to connect Sweden to the transit route and with Russia and Safavid state [21].

On the other hand, this method of conducting diplomacy was already in practice. It is known that both the rulers of Aq-Qoyunlu and the Safavid shahs used the services of major merchants in carrying out diplomatic missions. Armenian merchants were involved in the embassy. In 1469, with the proposal to form a coalition alliance against the growing Ottoman empire, Aq Qoyunlu sultan Uzun Hasan sent to Venice (then Rome and Naples) his ambassador named Mirat (Mirat de nazione armeno). According to Ghevond Alishan, this Mirak was the same famous Armenian merchant Khoja Mirak from Tabriz [4], the son of a silversmith and a jeweler, greatly honored and respected by Uzun Hasan [5]. He reached Venice on March 7, 1470 [6]; he stayed there for 4 months, then returned, bringing with him a friendly letter from the Republic of Venice to Uzun-Hasan. Khoja Mirak was assassinated in a conspiracy in 1486 or 1488. According to a record of an Armenian manuscript, Khoja Mirak had such a high reputation in Tabriz and Aq Qoyunlu court that after his conspiratorial murder, out of rage Yaqub Sultan first hit the murderer in the face with a stone, then ordered the executioner to execute the latter [7].

Anthony Jenkinson, who visited Safavid Iran to establish trade and diplomatic relations with Iran, testified that during his stay in Shamakhi (1557) he received a visit by the Armenian envoy of the king of Georgia [8], asking for support from two tyrants, the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I and Safavid Shah Tahmasp I of Great Turkey and the Sophie. Jenkinson suggested the Georgian king send his ambassador to Russians to receive support [9].

At the end of 1609, Abbas I sent the aforementioned Antonio de Gouvea (then in the service of the Safavids) to Spain and Rome to create an alliance against a common enemy - the Ottoman Turks [23], as well as Dengiz Beg Rumlu, a merchant who was supposed to accompany de Gouvea for about 100 bales of raw silk. At the Spanish court of Philip III (years of reign 1598-1621), where they arrived in 1611, a serious misunderstanding arose: Dengiz Beg sold more than half of all bales of silk for his own benefit.

De Gouvea offered the remaining bales of silk as a gift to the Spanish king, although the Iranian side intended to sell them as a sample of the silk they were going to supply in the future. As a result, De Gouvea and Dengiz achieved a trade agreement with Philip III, but it turned out to be useless, since the Spanish government never accepted it, and already in 1613 Shah Abbas ordered the execution of Dengiz [24].

Conclusions

As can be seen, during the period under study the method of "trade diplomacy" was quite widely used on the part of the European rulers, which implied the use of the services of merchants on diplomatic missions as (a) those who were most interested in establishing strong ties with Oriental countries, with the acquisition of guarantees and privileges, in order to expand their trade activities; b) persons most skilful in negotiations, who possessed sufficient information of those localities and peoples, and were more fluent and artful in making contact with them.

It was also easy for the traders to make contact with the local population, for whom the former were seen as key figures in the dialogue with Europe and the rest of the world. Merchant diplomacy in the researched period has done much to establish a dialogue between East and West, and also served as a bridge of mutual influence and dissemination of European civilizational gains to the more archaic and backward Oriental world.

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[2] A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the 15 and 16 centuries, ed. by Charles Grey, London, 1873, p. 15-16.

[3] A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the 15 and 16 centuries, ed. by Charles Grey, London, 1873, p. 70-71.

[4] Gh. Alishan, Hay-Venet kam harēnch‘ut‘iwnk‘ hayots‘ ew Venetats‘ i ZhG-D ew ZhE-Z dars, 1896, Venetik, (Ալիշան Ղ., Հայ-Վենետ, Վենետիկ, 1896) pp. 182-189.

[5] Colophons of XV Century Armenian Manuscripts, Part 3, Erevan, 1967. [ՇԷ-dari Hayeren Dzeragreri Hishatakaranner], p. 81-82.

[6] Archivio Storico Italiano, Volume 7, part 1, Firenze, publ. Gio. Pietro Vieusseux, 1843, p. 68.

[7] Colophons of XV Century Armenian Manuscripts, Part 3, Erevan, 1967. [ՇԷ-dari Hayeren Dzeragreri Hishatakaranner], p. 80-81.

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- [14] E. Morgan, C. Coote, *Early voyages and travels to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and other Englishmen*, New York, 1968, p. xxxi.
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