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Persian Work on the History of the Safavids in the British Museum

(Based on the works of V.F. Minorsky)¹

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Abstract. Research of well-known scholar-orientalist Vladimir Fedorovich Minorsky (1877-1966) is based on a large and often new factual material. Since 1937, he has investigated some of the important issues of political and social organization of the Safavid state. Eminent scholar emphasizes that the Safavid state was a typical feudal monarchy. Being the head of the Safavid state shahs had not only unlimited power as secular rulers, but, most importantly incarnated the highest spiritual authority as hereditary head of Ardebil dervish order. According to V.Minorsky's research, when the Safavids came to power, the rulers headed double administration "like kings, they inherited a control system of their predecessors (mainly Ak-Koyunlu); as the supreme head of the initial orders they demanded blind obedience to their Sufi." Besides with the description of the organization of power of various state institutions, the author in " Tadhkirat al- Muluk " examines the financial and economic structure of the state, including highlights of a number of issues of coinage and economy of the Safavid state. And more detailed described the duties of the bureaucracy, the payment system of the officials characterized the military units, the tax system, etc., which allows to trace better the evolution of social institutions on the example of the Safavid state.

Key words: S afavids , shah Ismail, Ardebil sheikhs, dynasty, tax system, the bureaucracy.

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Introduction. The research of the famous orientalist Vladimir Fedorovich Minorsky (1877-1966) is based on a large and often new factual material. Of great importance for identifying social and political institutions in the Safavid state is the previously inaccessible Persian source with the Arabic title " Tazkirat al- muluk " published in 1943 by V.F. Minorsky. (A Memo to Rulers). A facsimile of this work is now kept in the British Museum. [1. p . [252].

The value of this source is that it gives a fairly complete picture of the state apparatus and its individual links, as well as the finances of the Safavid state . Abundant digital material is provided. The work is compiled on the basis of official documents and archives. V.F. Minorsky , having studied the source, gives an English translation, with an introduction, extensive comments and appendices. Few sources of this type have reached us. Their paucity can be explained by the fact that they were not intended for the general public, but were intended only for a certain circle of government officials. Such treatises reflect the rights and duties of all representatives of the highest and lowest categories of government officials; they help to more deeply reveal the economic, social and political history and structure of the states of the medieval East.

As leading experts (V.V. Petrushevsky , O.A. Efendiev , V.V. Minorsky) point out, the ancestors of the Safavids were religious leaders, whose center for several centuries was the city of Ardabil . These sheikhs, living in an environment of holiness, were highly respected not only by the local population, but also by the rulers. Their influence spread so far that even some Turkic tribes in Asia Minor were their ardent supporters. The power was maintained with the help of the "shah-sevens " devoted to the rulers. Entirely devoted and faithful to the Safavi clan , this tribe enjoyed a special position and favor of the sovereign.

As the orientalist V. Minorsky points out , having come to power, the Safavids found themselves at the head of a dual administration: "as rulers, they inherited the system of governance of their predecessors (mainly the Ak- Koyunlu); as the supreme heads of the nascent order, they demanded blind obedience from their Sufis." During the period of unrest and intertribal discord , the Safavids , relying on the feeling of "humble devotion" of their supporters, the " shah-seven , " maintained the unquestioning submission of the murids to their " murshid -i kamil " (i.e., the shah), thanks to the strictest discipline that reigned among the followers of the order [2, p . 276].

" Tazkirat al- muluk " consists of five chapters: 1) on spiritual dignitaries (nikah), 2) on emirs (military nobility), 3) on mukarrabs (court dignitaries); 4) on financial officials, with digressions on court departments and palace craft workshops and on the staff of the department of the grand vizier , 5) on the administration of the capital city of Isfahan. In addition, the conclusion provides information on the salaries and income from the lands of dignitaries of the central administration, on the income and contingents of feudal militias of governors (beglerbeks) of the regions and local feudal lords, on the income and expenditure budget of the Safavid state.

According to V. Minorsky, the Safavid state was a typical feudal monarchy. The Safavid shahs who headed the state not only enjoyed unlimited power as secular rulers, but, most importantly, embodied in their persons the highest spiritual authority as the hereditary heads of the Ardabil Dervish order.

Emphasizing this theocratic tint of the Shah's power under the Safavids, V.F. Minorsky asserts that "the Safavid monarchy arose as a theocracy." Comparing it with the original Muslim community in Medina, he writes that if "Muhammad was only an apostle conveying messages from God, then Shah Ismail and his closest ancestors considered themselves hereditary and living incarnations of the deity" [10, p.292].

A Venetian merchant who visited Tabriz around 1518 noted: "the ruler is revered by the people with respect and love, as a god, and especially by his warriors, many of whom enter the battle without armor, expecting that Ismail is watching them in battle." In addition, it was reported that Shah Tahmasp was also an object of worship and "he is worshiped not as a ruler, but as a saint because of his descent from the family of Ali" [3, p. 2].

In the Tazkirat al- muluk there is information that the functions performed by viziers during the Safavid period bore little resemblance to the position of the vizierate. Abbasid -Caliphate model, the functions of the rather numerous Safavid viziers included mainly the preparation and registration of various kinds of documents [3, p. 8].

O. Efendiyev, having studied the work published by V. Minorsky, reports that under the first Safavids the state machine, the administrative system was much simpler than we observe in the 17th century. Judging by its description in "Tazkirat al- muluk", this took place mainly due to the central palace administration. O. Efendiyev explained this by the fact that in the 16th century the Safavid shahs were constantly on campaigns and rarely visited the capital. Their entire court and emirs participated in the campaigns with them. Therefore, the Safavids made do with a cheaper administrative apparatus. The leading positions under the first Safavids were: vekil, emir, kurchibashi, vizier and sadr.

The data of the "Tazkirat al- muluk" are supplemented and sometimes clarified by some official documents, in particular, the decree of Shah Sultan Hussein published below.

The decree, which dates back to January 1705, refers to the appointment of Nadir Khan. Khalifa twelve villages (communities) listed in the decree, where, according to the Shah's decree of December 1694-January 1695, before Nadir Khan Khalifa was his uncle Alif Khan. As noted in the decree, Talib Khalifa Mehdi -kuli's son made attempts to extend his power to the named villages (apparently after his death Khalifa Alif Khan). Arriving in the capital of the Safavids, referring to the decree of 1106 AH, Nadir Khan asked for the issuance of a confirmatory decree (shajareye ta`kid) on its approval Khalifa 12 villages named in the decree. Actions Khalifa The Taliban are declared illegal in the decree [5, p. 126].

The decree lists in detail the rights and duties of the caliph, which we do not find in either the Tazkirat al- muluk or in the narrative sources. In the Tazkirat al- muluk, there is only one remark

on the duties of the caliph in a small paragraph devoted to the caliphate al- khulafa . We will quote this paragraph in full: "Paragraph fourteen of the second section is devoted to a detailed exposition of the duties of the caliphate al- khulafa . The duty of the said [person] is to gather the dervishes and Sufis in the towhid - khan on Friday evenings and make them repeat the pious formula, "la ilaha illa "Allah " , by loud dhikr and to distribute among the dervishes on Friday evenings the established bread, halva and food, and on other occasions bread and food. [Assisting] him are two khalifas , the head of the servants [khadim-bashi] and several servants [amale]. Throughout the God-protected country, caliphs are appointed to monitor approved and sinful [actions], and they are determined on the recommendation of the khalifat al- khulafa , according to which the [shah's] decree is issued" [5, p. 137].

V. Minorsky drew attention to the fact that the Shah exercised control over his followers in the Ottoman Empire through the " caliphate al- khulafa " and the Sufis. He also noted that the " caliphate al- khulafa " in the " Tazkirat al- muluk " is mentioned in the section devoted to the highest civil ranks, and not the clergy, and that their functions are to some extent similar to the functions of shamans and lamas under the first Ilkhans . Comparing the " caliphate" with shamans can hardly be considered successful. The " caliphate al- khulafa " and the " caliphate" were active propagandists of the ideas of Shiism and possessed significant secular and political power.

The duties of the representatives of the bureaucratic apparatus, the system of payment of officials, the military militias, the tax system, etc. are described in more detail, which allows us to more fully trace the evolution of social institutions using the example of the Safavid state.

According to Chardin, the Safavid state was divided into four large financial divisions - Iraq, Fars, Azerbaijan and Khorasan. V. Minorsky points out that almost the same division is given in the " Tazkirat al- muluk ". The revenues received from different provinces of the country were attributed to the above-mentioned four economic regions. Considering separately all the regions indicated in this list, V. Minorsky writes: "The list of revenues of the Safavid state budget begins with the listing of the four north-western military commanderies (beglyarbeki) of Tabriz , Chukhur -i- Sa'd , as well as Karabakh and Shirvan. The term "Azerbaijan", which is used before this listing, probably refers to all four provinces. The same applies to the use of the term "Khorasan" in relation to the northeast, although such a simplified use of the term is incorrect and is not confirmed by geographical sources. In fact, only one province, which was under the command of the military commander Tabriz , occupied the greater part of historical Azerbaijan. In the chapter devoted to tax accounting – " ava-reje ", V. Minorsky points out that such a division of provinces has purely tax bases [5, p. 174].

As a result of the Ottoman onslaught, Chukhursaad lost half of its territory during 1535-1639. Of the former provinces (14th-16th centuries), only Irevan and Eastern Aghdam remained in the vilayet by the 1640s. Shuragel .

Along with the description of the organization of governance and various state institutions, the author dwells in detail in "Tazkirat al- muluk" on the financial and economic structure of the state, including covering a number of issues of coinage and the monetary economy of the Safavid state.

V. Minorsky in "Tazkirat al- muluk" gives an interesting description of the military power of the Safavids. The military power of Shah Ismail, with which he won a victory over Alvend and Murad Ak- koyunlu, was organized according to the principle of tribal kinship, even the defenders of the Sufis were designated in accordance with their belonging to their clan (4, p. 141).

The shortcomings of this system, compared with the modernized organization of the Ottomans, very soon became apparent in the unsuccessful battle of Chaldiran (1514). Soon, too, the Shah- Seven tribes, who formed the basis of the army, showed their praetorian character: individual tribes, supporting their own protégés in high positions, resisted the proposals of their rivals and often entered into hostility with them in the presence of the Shah. Such conditions, endangering the existence of the state, forced Shah Tahmasib to disband and disperse the disobedient tribes. But a fundamental reform was achieved only under Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), who reduced the number of tribal forces and, together with them, created new detachments, armed with modern weapons and completely dependent on the centralized state. Like the Ottoman Janissaries, the Shah's new guard was composed mainly of young Christians of Caucasian origin who were forcibly converted to Islam.

Contrary to the opinion that "under Shah Ismail, the Safavids did not yet have firearms," V. Minorsky claimed that "firearms were known in the Safavid state long before Shah Abbas." The earliest indication in sources of the use of cannons and guns (tup-o- tufang) by the Qizilbash, the scientist believed, was the siege of the Safavids Ercisha in 1552 [5, p.31]. These facts indicate that the Safavids had firearms from the very beginning. But they obviously had them in small quantities and they got them through Europeans from time to time, since the Safavids themselves did not produce them yet.

Referring to Chardin, V. Minorsky writes: "The Turkomans lived separately from the surrounding population." They were cattle breeders who moved with their herds and cattle from summer to winter camps. They consisted of tribes and obeyed the orders of their direct leaders. There was no place for national Persian traditions here. Like oil and water, the Turkomans and Persians did not easily make contact and the dual nature of the population had a profound effect on both the military and civil administration. Persia. It is true that the Safavids converted their Turkomans to their faith (meaning Shiism-G.S.), but with their help the whole of Persia was conquered" [5, p. 188].

The problem of the nationality of the sheikhs of the Safaviye order has always been of particular interest. V. Minorsky believed that the Safavids were the direct heirs of the Kara - Koyunlu and Ak - Koyunlu dynasties, with whom they were related in various ways. The state of

the first Safavids is considered by him as the third phase of the Azerbaijani state in Iran, meaning by the first two phases of the state the Kara -Koyunlu and Ak- Koyunlu [9, p. 134].

In fairness, it should be said that the question of the origin of the Safavids is still a subject of controversy. The difficulty in clarifying this issue is due to the fact that the only source containing information about the distant ancestors of the Safavids is the hagiographic work of Tawakkul ibn Ismail ibn Bezzaz entitled “ Saffat as- safa (“Purity of Purity”)” [6, p . 437]. The work of the dervish Tawakkul represents a typical Sufi a work replete with legendary stories about the miracles and life of Sheikh Safi ad-Din and was compiled in the second half of the 14th century. It is noteworthy, as researchers have established, that rare manuscripts were subject to such changes and falsifications as happened with the copies of " Saffat as- safa ".

Conclusion.

However, the opinion expressed by the outstanding Russian orientalist, academician V.V. Bartold , about the Turkic origin of the dynasty remains the most reliable and is confirmed by new source data. Touching upon the eponym and founder of this dynasty, Sheikh Safi ad -Din (1252-1334) and his descendants, the scholar noted that “these Ardebil sheikhs are undoubtedly not of Persian, but of Turkic origin” [7, p. 748].

A similar view was expressed by I. P. Petrushevsky: “The first Safavid sheikhs lived in Ardabil , their native language was Azerbaijani” [8, p. 205]. Although at the early stage of his research on the history of the Safavid state , orientalist V. Minorsky considered this dynasty to be Persian. Meanwhile, as early as 1925, academician V. Bartold noted in lectures in Baku that “these Ardabil dervishes were undoubtedly not of Persian, but of Turkic origin” [10, p. 748].

Apparently, this conclusion of the outstanding scientist remained unknown to V. Minorsky, who was never able to escape the influence of pan-Iranian historiography.

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