MUHAMMAD TAHIR VAHID’S WORK «ABBASNAMA» AS A SOURCE FOR STUDYING THE HISTORY OF THE SAFAVID STATE OF AZERBAIJAN DURING THE REIGN OF SHAH ABBAS II

Abstract. The article examines the importance of Mohammad Tahir Vahid’s «Abbasname» as a source for studying the history of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan during the reign of Shah Abbas II. It is known that narrative sources dedicated to the reign of Shah Abbas II are a minority in historiography. The work «Abbasname» by the 17th century chronicler M.T. Vahid has a special scientific significance in this sense. Manuscripts of the work are kept in world book funds. «Abbasname» describes the events that took place during the reign of Shah Abbas II. Thus, the author has provided valuable scientific information on the military-political history, domestic and foreign policy, socio-economic life of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan.

Keywords: Azerbaijan Safavid state, Shah Abbas II, «Abbasname»

It is known that the tradition of statehood is associated with the name of the Safavid state, one of the most glorious and politically rich historical periods of the Azerbaijani people, measured by millennia. From the establishment to the collapse of the centralized Safavid state, which literally united the lands of historical Azerbaijan, it functioned as an independent subject of international law for more than two centuries. At the same time, the Safavid state of Azerbaijan became an enormous empire in the history of our people and played an important role in the history of many peoples of the East [1, s.3].

While the history of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan as a whole in the 16th century and the first decades of the 17th century has been extensively studied in historiography, the period of this state, especially the 30s-90s of the 17th century, including the reign of Shah Abbas II- 24-year historical period (1642-1666), has not
been thoroughly studied. In our opinion, this is due to a number of factors, especially the lack of narrative sources for the period in question. Although many documentary sources, especially decrees, relating to the reign of Shah Abbas II have survived, it is impossible to say the same about chronicle-type sources [2, s.4].

It should be noted that although the documentary sources, especially the decrees, are still rich in information on the forms of land ownership, the financial and tax system, and partly on management issues, but are not sufficient to fully restore the overall picture of the period as they do not reflect information on other issues - the economy, its separate areas, information about the foreign policy of the Safavid state. All these gaps can be filled only by engaging in the study of materials from chronicle-type sources.

Among the few narrative sources dedicated to the reign of Shah Abbas II, the 17th-century chronicler M.T. Vahid’s «Abbasname» is of great scientific importance in this regard. Considering that the recent successes of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan are connected with the name of Shah Abbas II, it is not difficult to understand the great need for a comprehensive study of this period. The establishment of large-scale diplomatic relations between Shah Abbas II, the Ottoman and Great Mongol empires, the Russian state, Bukhara and Khiva khanates, a comprehensive study of the diplomatic activity of our country, which led to a balanced foreign policy, is important for the correct direction of Azerbaijan’s foreign policy [3, s.4].

«Abbasname» examines the experience of the Council of Justice established during the reign of Shah Abbas II, the activities of the government-people, officials-people relations, the principles of social justice, which are distinguished by their relevance in all historical periods.

Although M.T. Vahid, who was appointed the official palace historian of Shah Abbas II, began his work by presenting a short genealogy of the Safavids, he only commented on the events that took place during the reign of Shah Abbas II. It should be noted that for unknown reasons, the author did not write about the events that took place in the last 3-4 years of the reign of Shah Abbas II.
Although the biography of the author of the chronicle, Mohammad Tahir Vahid, is not so extensive in the historical literature, it is possible to find some information. Imaduddovla Mirza Muhammad Tahir Vahid Qazvini were born in 1015 (1606-1607) according to the Hijri calendar in Qazvin, in the family of Mirza Huseyn khan, a middle-class civil servant [4].

M.T. Vahid is the brother of the famous historian of the period, the author of the chronicle «Holde Berin» Muhammad Yusif Qazvin. Although there is no information about his childhood and youth, it is known that Mirza Mohammad Tahir had close ties with Mirza Tagi, known as nickname Sari Tagi, who served as grand vizier during the reigns of Shah I Safi and Shah II Abbas. It was on the basis of Mirza Taghi’s guarantee that Mirza Mohammad Tahir was appointed in 1645 to the post of palace historian of Shah Abbas II [5, p.37; 6, Foreword]. After his assassination in 1645 for his arbitrariness as Grand vizier Mirza Taghi, he was replaced by Khalifa Sultan. Mirza Mohammad Tahir remained a palace historian with the help of the Caliph Sultan, as he had close ties with the new grand vizier [7]. This information provided by I.P. Petrushevsky and Ibrahim Dehgani is also confirmed by the famous orientalist Ch.Story. According to Ch. Story, after Imad Ad-Dovla Muhammad Tahir Vahid bin Mirza Hussein khan Qazvini served as a secretary under the clerk Mirza Taghi ad-Din Muhammad and the Caliph Sultan, in 1645, according to him, he was appointed palace historian of Shah Abbas II. Mirza Mohammad Tahir II remained in that position after the death of Shah Abbas for his loyal and capable service to the Safavid state, and was even appointed grand vizier by Suleiman Shah (1667-1694). Mirza Mohammad Tahir, who was appointed Grand vizier in 1679-80, served in this position for eighteen years and resigned due to old age and incapacity for work. According to the historian Sheikh Mohammad Khazi, who was born in Isfahan in 1692, Mohammad Tahir Vahid saw him several times at his father’s house after his resignation. According to Khazi, Mohammad Tahir was appointed a vizier during the reign of Vahid Shah Suleiman, and resigned during the reign of Sultan Hussein (1694-1722). After that, Fatali khan was appointed grand vizier in 1699. Muhammad Tahir Vahid lived a long life and died in 1110 (1699) [8, c.II, p.888; 9].
Appointed Grand vizier in 1645, Mohammad Tahir Vahid witnessed and personally participated in many events of the period, as well as participated in many visits and marches of Shah Abbas II. At the behest of the Shah, the author began to write a chronicle no later than 1653-1654 on the basis of the materials he had collected, and completed it in about 1665-1666. Numerous manuscripts of the chronicle compiled by Mohammad Tahir Vahid under different names - «Riyad at-Tawarikh», «Riyazul-Akbar», «Riyad at-Tawarikh-i Tahir-i Vahid», «Tarikh-i Tahir-i Vahid», «Tarikh-i shah-i Abbas-i sani», «Abbasname» is kept in various libraries of the world [10, c.II, p.889; 11, p.37].

At present, «Abbasname» has manuscripts in many book collections around the world, including Birton (Ethe), Madrasa, St. Petersburg, Bankipur, London (Icon College Library), Tehran, Oxford (Bondian Library), Dhaka, Aligrah and others. The copy of «Abbasname», known as Riyadh at-Tawarikh, consists of three chapters. The third chapter of the copy covers the historical events of the reign of Shah Abbas II from 1663 to 1664. However, the title of the work is omitted from the text of the late seventeenth-early eighteenth-century copy of the work (Miklukho Maclay III, № 349), listed by the well-known orientalist Miklukho-Maclay in St. Petersburg. However, the orientalist Sprenger recorded this manuscript of the last chapter belonging to Mohammad Tahir Vahid under the title «Riyadh at-Tawarikh».

The 18th-century copy of the work encoded in naqis Bankipur VI. 523 covers only the historical events of the reign of Shah Abbas II, and in one part of the copy the title of the chronicle is «Riyazul-Akbar» and in another part «Riyad at-Tawarikh-i Tahir-i Vahid» [12, c.II, p.889].

The St. Petersburg manuscript of Riyadh at-Tawarikh consists of a preface and three chapters. The first chapter gives a brief overview of the history before the Safavid dynasty came to power. The second chapter covers the historical period from the accession of Shah Abbas I to the coming to power of Shah Abbas II and is divided into six chapters. The first chapter of the second chapter deals with Shah Ismail I, the second chapter with Shah Tahmasib I, the third chapter with Shah Ismail II, the fourth chapter with Mohammad Khudabend, the fifth chapter with Shah Abbas I, the sixth chapter with Shah Safi I and famous people of those times. The
third chapter is directly dedicated to the reign of Shah Abbas II, and in this part the events are described from 1663 to 1664 [13, c.II, p. 888-890].

Other manuscripts of M.T. Vahid’s work consist of the third chapter in Riyadh at-Tawarikh. Many scholars believe that the Abbasnama, written by Muhammad Tahir Vahid, was later added to Riyadh at-Tawarikh as the third chapter.

Manuscripts of the « Abbasname » compiled in the 17th and 19th centuries are mostly listed under the names « Abbasnama », « Tarikh-i Tahir-i Vahid », « Tarikh-i Shah-i Abbas-i Sani », and almost all of them are naqis copies. Thus, these manuscripts cover the years of the reign of Shah Abbas II 1642-1656. Only two editions of these manuscripts describe the events of the period from 1663 to 1664 [14, c.II, p.890].

M.T. Vahid’s work «Abbasname» caused serious interest in world oriental studies in the XIX century. Short excerpts from the work were published by the famous orientalist B. Dorn (Manuscript IV AN. D-89). Pages 218 b-220 a, 229 b, 236 a of 303 manuscripts listed by B. Dorn were translated into Russian by A.A. Romaskevich and published. By the way, it should be noted that A.A. Romaskevich’s calling this chronicle «beautiful in style, weak in content» is a bit unfair [15, p.8]. The well-known orientalist I.P. Petrushevsky objected to A.A. Romaskevich’s opinion about the chronicle and considered his opinion very harsh [16, p.37-38]. Indeed, although the history of wars is preferred in «Abbasname», as Petrushevsky points out, the work contains many unique materials on state-building, taxes, property relations, financial institutions, as well as the South Caucasus as a whole.

Theses of N.D. Miklukho-Maclay, one of the researchers of the source, at a scientific session in Leningrad on manuscripts of the work in Russia were published in 1966. I.P. Petrushevsky, who involved the work in the study, also gave brief information about the biography of Vahid, the working names of the manuscripts, used the manuscript of B. Dorn (Ruk. LGPB, catalog Dorna, № 303) during the research [17, p.37-38].

The famous orientalist Ch.Story also gave interesting information about the manuscripts of M.T. Vahid’s «Abbasname» kept in the world book funds, the names
and volumes of those copies, the biography of the author of the chronicle [18, c.II, p.888-889].

M.T. Vahid’s work «Abbasname» was first edited and compiled by Ibrahim Dehgani by the efforts of Seyid Muhammad Davudi, the director of the Davudi library, and was published in 1329 (Hijri calendar) in the Arak district. The «Abbasname», published by Ibrahim Dehgani, reflects the events of 1052-1073 (Hijri calendar), i.e. from 1642 to 1663-1664, when Shah Abbas II came to power. The «Abbasname» does not provide information about the events that took place in the last three or four years of the reign of Shah Abbas II. Although it is unfortunate that the chronicler did not write about the last four years of the reign of Shah Abbas II, the reasons for this are unknown to researchers. Ibrahim Dehgani also had information about the incomplete copies of the chronicle, the copies reflecting the events of 1642-1656, and he used those copies when preparing his work for publication. The copy prepared by Ibrahim Dehgani for publication was complete and perfect, in addition to the beautiful handwriting, according to the publisher, the instructions of Shah Abbas II were also recorded on the manuscript. Research shows that after completing the chronicle, Vahid presented a draft version of it to the shah. After reviewing the book by Shah Abbas I, the author, taking into account his instructions, copied the manuscripts of the book and prepared the main version of the chronicle [19].

By the time the main version of the chronicle was ready, it seems that Shah Abbas II had already died. In the main pages of the chronicle, Mohammad Tahir Vahid’s description of Shah Abbas II with epithets such as Novvab Sahibgran (happy, fortunate), Khalladaklah (may God perpetuate his rule), and in the last pages Kholdashyan (deceased) already indicates his death. The mentioned copy of the source is written both in beautiful handwriting and without mistakes. All this shows that the copyist of the book was aware of the pages in the draft copy, and for this reason he made corrections and corrections when compiling the main copy. It is believed that the last, perfect copy of the chronicle was written by Vahid himself. Dehgani made some corrections to the manuscript he had prepared for publication, and added notes and comments.
Based on the publication of the well-known Iranian scholar Sattar Avdi Ibrahim Dehgani, «Abbasname» was abbreviated and published in Tehran in 1384 of the Hijri calendar under the title Sargozasht-i Shah Abbas devvom [20]. It should be noted that both Ibrahim Dehgani and Sattar Avdi’s publication versions of M.T. Vahid’s «Abbasname» were involved in the investigation of the problem.

«Abbasname» differs from other chronicle sources of the Safavid period in some respects. Thus, immediately after the presentation of the short genealogy of Shah Abbas II, this chronicle contains a description of the events of his reign. However, other narrative sources, as a rule, also cover the history of the Safavid dynasty up to the time when the authors were contemporaries. On the other hand, the events in the Abbasnama differ from other chronicle-type sources of the period in that they are presented in chronological order by years.

As a participant, witness and contemporary of many of the events described by M.T. Vahid, he was able to substantiate and write them in detail. In his work, the author praised Shah Abbas II as an incomparable, great ruler, a determined politician, a supporter of progress, a just and reformist statesman. Along with the ruler, the chronicle includes the appointment of various officials to the Safavid state of Azerbaijan, the termination of office for various reasons, and a brief biography of many emirs and officials. In the «Abbasname» you can find valuable information on various aspects of the domestic policy of the Safavid state, including construction, forms of land ownership, tax policy.

Along with the domestic policy of Shah Abbas II, M.T. Vahid gave extensive information about many aspects of the foreign policy of the Safavid state. Thus, the work can be considered a very valuable source on the history of the Safavid state, as it contains significant facts and information about the relations of the Safavid state with the Turkestan khanates (Bukhara, Khiva), the Great Mongols, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. M.T. Vahid’s work also covers the internal political situation in Georgia and the differences between the Georgian emirs and princes.

In his work «Abbasname», M.T. Vahid provided valuable scientific information about the military-political history, domestic and foreign policy, socio-
economic life of the Safavid state of Azerbaijan as a whole. It should also be noted that in this valuable source, the administrative-administrative system of Tabriz, Shirvan, Karabakh and Chukhur-Saad principalities, which includes the historical lands of Azerbaijan, invaluable information on the structure of the state and its place and role in provincial governance has been collected, which is not found in most sources.

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