

THE TRADE CENTERS OF THE SOUTHERN BLACK SEA REGION AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE RELATIONS OF AZERBAIJAN BEFORE THE OTTOMAN INVASION

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Abstract: Till the 1450s, the Ottoman Empire had no serious influence on the Black Sea coast yet. The Republics of Genoa and Venice, special trade colonies of on the shores of the Black Sea, were more active in commercial activities. The main trade Genoese colony was the city of Kaffa, located in the Crimea. In the middle of the 15th century, European merchants tried to buy raw silk, imported from Azerbaijan, in the main trading centers of Genoa, Constantinople, and the Southern Black Sea region. The raw silk, imported from Gilan, Astrabad, Lahijan and Mazandaran, was bought by European merchants as a high-quality raw material in the listed trading centers.

In the second half of the 15th century, the advance of the Ottoman empire to the west and the subsequent conquest of important trade centers in the Black Sea, Mediterranean and Aegean seas, where they traded with European countries, dealt a blow to the silk trade of Azerbaijan.

Keywords: *Genoese colonies, Kaffa, Silk, Talaman Silk, the Baku Sea, International Trade*

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the 15th century, European merchants of Genoa, Constantinople, Kaffa and other major trading centers of the Southern Black Sea region strived to buy more raw silk imported from Azerbaijan. In these trade centers, the raw silk, imported from Gilan, Astrabad, Talysh, Lahijan and Mazandaran, was purchased by European merchants as a high-quality raw material. In the materials of the Italian archives, some information about the process of buying and selling raw silk, imported to the Black Sea markets from Azerbaijan, deserves attention. The trade activities of these centers in the 13th-15th centuries were reflected in the *Codice documents* published and stored in the Genoa archive. [Vigna, Amedeo (1874)]. Although indirectly, these documents show that starting from the 1400s, there have been permanent trade relations between Azerbaijan and the trade centers of the Southern Black Sea region. The Eastern goods, such as raw silk, precious stones, iron, spices and others, were delivered to Tabriz through Qazvin and Sultaniya, and from there to the Black Sea coast and Kaffa. It is noted that at that time Kaffa was one of the main trade centers supplying Europe with the Eastern goods.

In the 15th century, due to the rapid development of the silk industry in Italian cities, the need for Azerbaijani silk increased significantly [Мусрафаев III.M. (1994): 132-134]. For the regular supply of these industrial enterprises with raw materials, there were

trading organizations of Venetian and Florentine merchants and their permanent representative offices, which were engaged only in the purchase and shipment of silk to Europe.

The Place of the Kaffa in the International Trade Relations of Azerbaijan

In Constantinople, there were trading colonies of merchants from Florence and Catalonia back in the 1430s [Шитиков М.М. (1965): 127]. These merchants lived in Bursa, Trabzon, Kaffa and in other cities, and were active in the silk trade. Bursa functioned, first of all, as a famous center of trade for the oriental goods in this trade.

Trade in oriental goods took place between Constantinople and Kaffa, moreover, at the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries, Kaffa had trade relations with the Middle Eastern and Central Eurasian countries, including Azerbaijan. And this period, highly developed trade prevailed in the region. However, in the late 14th - early 15th centuries, the occupation of Azak, the Golden Horde city in the delta of Don near the Azov Sea, by Emir Timur, heavily devastated the settlement and cut off the northern road connecting Kaffa with the Volga region, Azerbaijan, Central Asia, China and India [Чиперис А.М. (1974): 175].

In accordance to the Codice documents, constant trade relations existed between Kaffa and Azerbaijan since the 15th century [Vigna, Amedeo (1874): 567–886]. Main products of international trade, such as raw silk, spices, precious stones and metal, even iron, and other oriental goods were delivered to Tabriz through Qazvin, Sultaniye, from there by the Black Sea to Kaffa [Чиперис А.М. (1974): 183]. It is noted that at that time Kaffa was one of the main trading centers that supplied Europe with the oriental goods.

Some aspects of the issue, the trading activities of Kaffa and other trading ports of the Black Sea of this period, were studied by the Turkish researcher Selahattin Tansel. Describing the activities of the Black Sea ports in the 15th century, Tansel notes that Kaffa was a city where different peoples converged and traded [Tansel (1953): 272]. Back in 1261, under the Treaty of Nymphaeum between Genoa and Byzantium, the Genoese founded number colonies in the important areas of the Black Sea, including Kaffa, and took full control of trade in these areas. Under this treaty, the Genoese received the right to freely sail and trade in the Black Sea [Чиперис А.М. (1974): 182]. Although the foundation of Kaffa has no direct connection with the Treaty of Nymphaeum, it had a serious impact on the expansion of the Genoese colonies. It should be noted that the exact time of the founding of Kaffa is unknown; the first mentions of Kaffa date back to 1289 and 1290. It can be concluded that by this time a Genoese colony already existed on the site of the former Theodosius of Miletus [Batou J. and H. Szljajfer. (2009): 101].

The Codice documents prove that Genoese merchants played an important role in Kaffa's trade relations with the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus [Чиперис А.М. (1974): 172]. In accordance to the dairies of European travelers and merchants from Genoa and Venice trade in the Caspian Sea and in various trade centers of Azerbaijan. They note that merchants from Genoa and Venice come here (meaning the city of Sultania - A.J.) to buy silk. Christian merchants from Kaffa and Trebizond, as well as Turkish and Syrian merchants, annually came to the city of Sultania for goods [Путешественники об Азербайджане (1961): 58]. In this regard, it worthy to mention Ruy Gonzales de

Clavijo's remarks: This city, Tabriz, conducts great trade and brings great income to its sovereign. In addition, most of the silk, brought there, is produced in Gilan, a land located near the Baku Sea, where a lot of silk is produced every year. This Gilan silk goes to Damascus, to the land of Syria, to Turkey, to Kaffa and to many other places. They also bring here silk, which is made in the land of Shamakhi; this is a land where a lot of silk is made, and even Genoese and Venetian merchants come there for silk [Клавиho, Руи Гонсалес (1990): 178].

Even after the Ottoman occupation, the silk trade of Venetian merchants continued in the trading centers of the Southern Black Sea region. The Venetian merchants supplied European markets with a variety of oriental goods through trade in the important Black Sea trading centers. This trade was handled by Giacomo Badoer, the special representative of the Venetian merchants for the Black Sea trade centers. Badoer's representative in Kaffa was Andrea da Calais [Шитиков М.М. (1965): 134].

According to the Turkish historian Ismail Hakki Uzuncharshili, silk was an important raw material exported from Anatolia to Istanbul and European markets at the end of the 14th century. Italian merchants who traded with eastern countries from the Black Sea arranged the warehouses in the Black Sea trade centers and in Istanbul, conducting an active trade with eastern countries [I.H. Uzunçarşılı (1988): 250-254].

Numerous colonies of Western merchants existed in the Black and Mediterranean trade centers, where they were widely engaged in commercial activities. During this period, Italian merchants played a leading role in the foreign trade of Byzantium. Basically, various raw materials were imported from the Balkans, Asia Minor, the Northern Black Sea region, as well as from the eastern countries, including Azerbaijan. However, after the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans, its role in the trade relations with the West was significantly weakened. It is noteworthy that in the book of accounts of Giovanni Piccamiglio, a Genoese merchant who was engaged in eastern trade in 1456-1459, there is very little information about the trade activities during this period of Constantinople, Kaffa, Tana, and with the countries of the East. Russian researcher Mikhail Shitikov notes that Giovanni Piccamiglio had active trade relations with such trade centers as Cairo, Beirut and Alexandria [Шитиков М.М. (1962): 49]. He also indicates that Piccamiglio's income for the three and half years was only 1 percent [Шитиков М.М. (1969): 99], which shows that the income of Italian merchants had decreased by this time. Another researcher of the issue, Yaqub Makhmudov, notes that after the capture of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles by the Ottoman Empire, which connected the Mediterranean Sea with the Black Sea, Aleppo, Beirut, Damascus and other Central Asian cities were the most convenient places for Azerbaijani merchants to contact the Venetians. As the trade with Europeans through the Black Sea became more complicated, the role of these Central Asian cities in the international trade relations of Azerbaijan increased [Махмудов Я.М. (2011): 115].

In the first half of the 15th century, the Venetian colonies in Constantinople became more active. This colony was under control of the bailo, who was appointed by the Republic of Venice for 2 years. He received a salary of 1000 ducats a year. The bailo of Trabzon (*Trapezus*) received 500 ducats, the bailo of Negroponte received 700 ducats, and the bailo Coron and Modon received 400 ducats. These bays were mainly engaged in trade [Шитиков (1965): 58].

The treaties signed between Venice and Byzantium in 1406, 1412, 1418, 1423, 1431, 1436, 1442, 1447 and 1450 respectively confirmed the trade privileges of the Venetians. The articles of these treaties granted the Venetian merchants the right to the trade without paying customs duties; free entry and exit; providing housing for merchants and traders, etc. These privileges allowed Venetian merchants to have a certain advantage in the trading markets of Constantinople, compared to other European and Eastern merchants. Along with the Venetian merchants, Genoese merchants also actively conducted the eastern trade. The Italian archives, including the "Trade Book" by the Venetian merchant Giacomo Badoer, show that the Genoese merchants were more closely connected with the eastern markets than the Venetian merchants. Filippo de Giacomo, a Genoese merchant, who traded with Badoer and the Da Capri brothers, bought oriental goods, mainly raw silk, wax, leather, honey and spices [Шитиков (1965): 60]. These facts are further evidence that Genoese merchants brought oriental goods, bought in the markets of Bursa, Kaffa and Adrianople to Constantinople, where they sold them to the Western merchants.

And there is also the "Book of the Massaria of Kafa 1441–1442", as an account book, where, in addition to news of a political nature, it contains a large amount of information of economic nature. This document contains the earliest evidence of that time, also containing numerous data on various aspects of economic life Kaffa. [Джанов А.В. (2021): 308]. Being one of the most valuable sources for the study of history on the Northern Black Sea region in the second half of the 14th - the third quarter of the 15th centuries, these are the accounting books of the treasury of Kaffa (books of the Massaria of Kaffa). Back in 1855, Michele Giuseppe Canale compiled the first brief review of the collection of books of the massaria of Kaffa from the fund of the St. George bank in Genoa and used them in his work on the history of the Genoese presence in the East and the Black Sea. Some excerpts from books Massaria of Kaffa were published by Nicolae Iorga at the end of the 19th century. For more than a hundred years, these publications have served as the most important source for the reconstruction of relations between the Genoese Kaffa and neighboring states: the Golden Horde, the Crimean Khanate, the Principality of Theodoro, Moldova, the Trebizond and Ottoman empires. [Джанов А.В. (2019): 81]

In the autumn of 1453, the authorities of the Republic of Genoa transferred their trading posts in the Overseas (Oltremare), including Kaffa, to the bank of St. George (Casa di San Giorgio). Some of the previous period financial documentations of Kaffa were transferred to the bank, and in the future almost all the documents flow between Genoa and Kaffa were accumulated in the archive. This diverse documentation, after many ups and downs, merged into collection of the State Archives of Genoa (Archivio di Stato di Genova) as a special fund "The St. George House of Shopping and Bank" (La Casa delle compere e dei banchi di San Giorgio). A grand corpus of Genoese documents related to the Crimea, mainly for the period 1453–1475, was identified in this fund and published in three huge volumes back in the 19th century by the Genoese archivist Amedeo Vigna. Most of them came from the bank's fund. It was, of course, not the last discovery in the archive of documents related to the Black Sea. However, it must be said that Vigny's "Codice" is still promising a source of information on the history of the

Black Sea basin and the South East Europe in the XIII-XV centuries. [Джанов А.В. (2019): 79]

From the above mentioned data on this issue, we can conclude that in the trading centers of the Black and Mediterranean coasts, where the eastern and western trade was carried out, Venice, Genoa and, to some extent, other European merchants played an important role. Along with Venetian merchants, Genoese merchants also actively traded in the markets of Constantinople. And among the silk producers, with whom European merchants traded through Kaffa, were masters from Azerbaijan. I.H. Uzuncharshili notes the role of such European states as Venice, Genoa, Florence, Dubrovnik, Ragusa among the countries with the closest economic ties with the trading markets of the Ottoman Empire in the 14th-15th centuries [Uzunçarşılı İ.H. (1940): 149].

Trade centers of the Southern Black Sea Region and Azerbaijan the Second Half of the 15th century

The trade centers of the Black and Mediterranean Seas played an important role in Azerbaijan's silk trade with the Ottoman Empire and Europe. Turkish researcher Kemal Karpat notes that during the reign of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, Turkish-Muslim merchants replaced Italian merchants in the Aegean and Black Sea trade. He notes the fact that the state received a large income from this trade. Available documents show that the Turks were in the first place in the field of trade during this period [Karpat K. (1988): 298]. However, referring to Italian authors, Sergey Karpov notes that the Venetian silk trade in the trade centers of the Southern Black Sea region, including Samsun and Sinop, continued after the conquest of these territories by the Ottomans [Карпов С.П. (1990): 118]. This became one of the main issues raised by Abdullah Al-Ahsan. He notes that, despite all these wars, Venice and other Italian cities were able to continue their trading activity. He points out that in the 1500s the volume of trade in these regions increased slightly compared to the 1400s. Al-Ahsan also notes that the conquest of Constantinople changed trade relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire and other Eastern states [Ahsen A. (1997): 207]. In fact, these conquests led, on the one hand, to the dominance of Ottoman merchants in the main trading centers on the Black Sea and Mediterranean coasts, and on the other hand, to limiting the trade of Azerbaijani merchants in the trading centers of this region. Thus, dominance over the above regions led to significant changes in the commercial life of the Ottoman state.

Silk, produced in the cities of Azerbaijan, was of great interest to Italian merchants. It is not coincidental that Ambrogio Contarini, the ambassador of the Republic of Venice in Tabriz, who visited the palace of Uzun Hassan, describes the Shamakhi silk in his "Viaggio al signor Usun Hassan". He writes that on November 1, 1475, we arrived in the city of Shamakhi. Silk, prepared in this city, known to us under the name of Talaman Silk, and, in addition, various silk fabrics, made here, for the most part are smooth and not too good; Shamakhi is not as large as Tabriz, but, in my opinion, in all respects it is much better and more plentiful with all sorts of supplies. [Контарини Амброджо (1836): 78]

In general, the silk trade, especially with Azerbaijan, was of great importance for the Ottoman Empire as well. Kemal Karpat notes that silk imported from Azerbaijan was an important raw material for domestic and foreign trade. Active trade in this product was

carried out in Amasya, Bilecik, Bursa, Diyarbakir, Mardin and Aleppo. Silk from the Caspian coastal regions of Azerbaijan was the most sought after commodity of Western merchants in the Ottoman markets [Karpas K. (1988): 308].

As it is known, during the considered period, there was no a single centralized state in Italy. Italy was going through a period of deep political fragmentation. The economy of the developed Italian city-republics was based not on the domestic market, but on the foreign markets, especially on the eastern trade. The issue of ownership of the eastern markets, as well as the Black and Mediterranean trading rows, abounding in the oriental goods, caused internal dissatisfaction among the Italian republics. The tensions between Venice, Genoa, Florence and Pisa are mainly characterized by the dominance of the Venetian Republic in the eastern trade and over the important trading centers of the time. Genoa, Florence and other city-states made various attempts to exclude Venice from the Eastern trade and restore their former dominance. Conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and Venice gave impetus to the plan of other Italian city-states against Venice. [Cavadova A.S. (2017): 73]. Genoa even helped Sultan Mehmet II during the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 in order to exclude Venice from eastern trade and gain an advantage in this area. In return, Mehmet II granted the Republic of Genoa the privileges of ensuring free trade here and the inviolability of its property [Orhonlu C. (1984): 24].

Under an agreement of the Ottoman Empire with Pisa and Florence in 1460, these states enjoyed the privilege of free trade in Ottoman territory and the establishment of an embassy in Istanbul [Orhonlu C. (1984): 26]. Taking advantage of the conflict between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, the Florentine ambassador in Istanbul managed to drive the Venetians out of the city, and the Florentine merchants settled in the Venetian shopping center. The conquest of Bosnia by the Ottoman Empire posed a serious threat to the Adriatic provinces of Venice, which led to closer cooperation between Florence and Genoa and the Ottoman Empire against Venice in the Venetian-Ottoman war (1463-1479) [Махмудов Я.М. (2011): 130]. Later, however, Venice, like Genoa and Florence, received the same trading privileges.

Speaking about the role of Istanbul in trade between East and West, R. Mantran writes that Istanbul was an important center of trade from the Black Sea to Azerbaijan and Central Asia. After the conquest of Istanbul, the Turks took over the Black Sea trade and transferred the right of trade to Genoa, Florence, and then Venice. [Mantran R. (1987): 1435].

In the second half of the 15th century, the advance of the Ottoman state to the west and the subsequent conquest of important trade centers in the Black, Mediterranean and Aegean seas, where they traded with European countries, dealt a blow to the silk trade of Azerbaijan. The obstruction of the Euro-Asian trade by the Ottoman state, or rather the restriction of trade with Europeans in the Ottoman markets, also affected the interests of Azerbaijan. The customs policy of the Ottoman Empire dealt a heavy blow to the silk trade of Azerbaijani merchants with Europeans. Such measures, first of all, were aimed at preventing the export of raw silk from the countries of the East, especially Azerbaijan, to the European countries from the Ottoman markets. The Ottoman state, in order to gain advantages in trade with the East and provide the growing silk industry with raw materials, sought to conquer Eastern Anatolia and, thus, establish its control over the silk route of Tabriz-Aleppo, Tabriz-Bursa [İnalçik H. (1988): 300].

CONCLUSION

The Ottoman Empire, starting from the middle of the 15th century, captured the last centers of the caravan routes going from the interior of Asia to the shores of the Black and Mediterranean Seas. At the same time, after the opening of the sea route to India, the trade in spices between Asian and European countries was transferred to Portugal, and Azerbaijan's international trade relations were again hit. After the capture of Ormuz by Portugal in 1515, Azerbaijan lost access to the Indian Ocean.

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