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THE RELATIONS OF CILDIR GOVERNOR SULEYMAN PASHA WITH THE AZERBAIJAN KHANATES (LAST QUARTER OF THE 18TH CENTURY)

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Introduction

The Caucasus region, and particularly Azerbaijan, has historically held significant strategic importance, having been continuously inhabited since antiquity and frequently contested due to its abundant resources. This area has served as a crossroads for various political powers seeking to establish hegemony over a vast territory extending from Anatolia and the northern Black Sea region to Central Asia. Following the consolidation of its rule over Anatolia, the Ottoman Empire also pursued expansion into this region to strengthen its influence. During the 16th and 17th centuries, this geography became a battleground for the rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Persia (Iran). In the latter half of the 18th century, the Russian Empire emerged as a new contender in this competition, driven by its own imperial ambitions.

Russia emerged as the greatest threat to both the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus, fundamentally altering the fate of the region. From the final quarter of the 18th century onward, Russia's ambitions over Crimea and the Caucasus, as a rising imperial power, evolved into a struggle for regional influence with the Ottoman Empire. The defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774 and the subsequent Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca (1774), which initially granted political independence to Crimea and later resulted in its annexation by Russia in 1783 (13, p. 35-38), marked a significant turning point that shifted the balance of power in favor of Russia in the Caucasian context.

Russia's control over the Black Sea and the Ottoman Empire's lack of ports along this coastline exposed critical vulnerabilities in the defense of Istanbul and Anatolia. Consequently, the Ottoman Empire was compelled to implement new measures in the region to counter the mounting Russian threat. The Empire's regional military preparations aimed at reclaiming Crimea also served as a de facto defensive line against

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Russian expansion. When this defensive line is considered in broader terms, the guardians of Anapa, Poti and Sukhumi, along with the governors of Trabzon, Canik, Erzurum, and particularly Cildir Governor Suleyman Pasha, as well as the khans of the Caucasus-Dagestan region, the Abkhazians, Circassians, and Tatars, all played a crucial role in safeguarding the northeastern frontier of the Ottoman Empire.

Suleyman Pasha, who had previously served as the governor of Cildir, was a descendant of Ishak Pasha (I). The governorship of Cildir was conferred upon Suleyman Pasha, formerly the Bey of Livane (Artvin), with the rank of Beylerbeyi of Rumelia on 18 Ramadan 1184 (5 January 1771). In addition to his duties as governor of Cildir, he was also appointed to the governorship of the Trabzon province on 19 Muharram 1186 (22 April 1772), a position he held for approximately one year (24, p. 91-92).

During Suleyman Pasha's initial tenure as Bey of Livane and governor of Cildir, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774 was ongoing. On the Caucasian front of the conflict, Erekli (Irakly II, Heraclius II), the Khan of Tbilisi (Kartli-Kakheti), initially received support from the Russians. However, due to disagreements with the Russian commander Totleben, he eventually began acting independently. His primary objective was to capture Akhaltsikhe (Ahiska). Although he failed to achieve this goal, he inflicted significant losses on the Ottoman forces during the Battle of Aspindza (24, p. 103-107). Aware that he would face retribution after the war's conclusion, Erekli Khan occasionally gave the impression of aligning himself with the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, he generally pursued a policy in cooperation with Russia, aiming to assert control over the Islamic khanates of Azerbaijan and Dagestan. Throughout his governorship, Suleyman Pasha's principal adversary was Erekli, the Khan of Tbilisi.

1. The Power struggle in the caucasus: Ottoman, Iran, and Russian ambitions

Following the assassination of Nader Shah, the ruler of Iran, in 1747, the Azerbaijani khans seized the opportunity created by the ensuing power vacuum and became embroiled in intense rivalries among themselves (9, p. 342). During this period of weakened central authority in Iran, a new era marked by the emergence of autonomous feudal khanates began in Azerbaijan. The rise of these khanates can be attributed to the absence of political and economic cohesion in the region, the weak inter-provincial ties, and the khans' collective desire to resist centralized authoritarian rule in favor of asserting independent sovereignty over their respective territories (13, p. 253).

It is undeniable that the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca, signed in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's decisive defeat by Russia in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774, rendered the Caucasus increasingly susceptible to Russian intervention. In particular, the de facto separation of Crimea from Ottoman control significantly broadened Russia's sphere of action in the Caucasus (23, p. 56-60, 166-167).

In this context, safeguarding the Ottoman Empire's sovereignty and interests in the Caucasus necessitated the adoption of more nuanced and strategically calculated policies. It was within this framework that Suleyman Pasha, Governor of Cildir (1771-1791), undertook efforts to prevent the regional khanates regarded by the Ottoman Empire as under its influence from aligning with or falling under the control of Russia. As part of these efforts, the gifts dispatched by the Ottoman Empire to the Azerbaijani and Dagestani khans were delivered through Suleyman Pasha. An examination of the general political orientation of the khanates reveals that those in northern Azerbaijan tended to remain within Suleyman Pasha's sphere of influence. Conversely, the southern Azerbaijani khanates, although seemingly receptive to Ottoman overtures

conveyed via Suleyman Pasha so as not to alienate themselves from the Empire were in practice more dependent on Iranian protection due to their geographical proximity. As such, they were more inclined to adhere to the traditional Iranian-aligned policies they had historically followed, rather than integrating fully into the Ottoman orbit (10, p. 126). In this regard, Suleyman Pasha formulated a strategic roadmap on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, adopting a comprehensive and pragmatic approach shaped by the region's complex geopolitical realities.

Another significant factor that facilitated the expansion of Russian influence in the Caucasus was the internal power struggles and political rivalries among the regional khans. As Russia completed the fortification of its military presence along the Caucasus frontier, Fathali Khan of Quba failed in his attempt to unify the Azerbaijani khanates under his leadership and to prevent foreign intervention whether from the Ottoman Empire, Russia, or Iran into their autonomous political structures. The nine month long Govdushan War of 1774, waged between Fathali Khan and the khanates of Shaki and Dagestan, resulted in widespread devastation, including a famine in Derbent. At this critical juncture, Fathali Khan who had maintained a policy of neutrality during the Ottoman-Russian War that began in 1768 sought support from Russia. In a letter addressed to Catherine the Great, he not only requested military assistance but also petitioned to be recognized as a Russian subject. Fathali Khan's appeal closely aligned with the expansionist objectives of Catherine the Great, who had already established a robust line of defense in the North Caucasus. She responded to his request with enthusiasm, viewing it as an opportunity to further consolidate Russian presence and influence in the region (17, p. 323; 13, p. 260-261).

It is understood that the responsibility of delivering Russian assistance to Fathali Khan was entrusted to General Medem. In the spring of 1775, a Russian military contingent consisting of 5,000 troops -comprising 3,000 regular and 2,000 irregular soldiers-entered the Dagestan region through the Kizlyar Fortress under General Medem's command. During this period, Fathali Khan, who had aligned himself with the Russian forces, reaffirmed his intention to place himself under Russian suzerainty by sending the keys of Derbent to Empress Catherine the Great. Fathali Khan, along with his accompanying troops, joined the detachment led by Major Kridner. Following the unification of Fathali Khan's forces with the Russian troops, the allied forces advanced toward the territory of the Kaitag Utsmi. In the ensuing battle, which took place approximately 16 kilometers from Derbent, the Kaitag Utsmi was defeated. Aware of the likelihood that Iran and the Ottoman Empire would not remain passive in response to Russia's expansion in the region, Catherine the Great ordered the withdrawal of Russian forces from Derbent in the spring of 1776, under the command of Major Fromhold (26, p. 107-109; 12, p. 151-153; 19, p. 323-324).

The Tbilisi Khanate, under the rule of Erekli Khan, also reached a critical juncture as Russia's expansionist policy began to be actively pursued in the region. Erekli Khan had already demonstrated his position by openly supporting Russia during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774 (22, p. 520). Following the consolidation of Russian control up to the Terek Line in the northern Caucasus, construction commenced on the Ananuri road -later known as the "Georgian Military Road"- which extended as far as Tbilisi. Simultaneously, efforts were made to remove all natural barriers that could impede the direct deployment of troops into Georgian territory (20, p. 52-53; 21, p. 95-97). In this way, the groundwork was laid for the long-anticipated Russo-Georgian alliance during the reign of Catherine the Great. According to historical sources, Erekli Khan was even more enthusiastic about establishing this alliance than the Russian authorities themselves (24, p. 22).

Between 1775 and 1777, Erekli Khan of Tbilisi, a regional ally of Russia, continued to support Russian military operations against Azerbaijan. The Russian forces that Erekle Khan brought into the region laid siege to the fortress of Sari Mustafa Pasha (Ganja) (11, p. 19), while also ravaging and setting fire to nearby settlements. In response to these developments, Mehemmed Hasan Khan -the Khan of Shaki and Shirvan- whom Erekli Khan had previously approached with a proposal for alliance, did not remain inactive and took decisive action. Suleyman Pasha directly intervened to secure Mehemmed Hasan Khan's involvement. Through Ibrahim Bey, the treasury scribe of the governor of Cildir, a jeweled watch, along with 1,000 cedit-i nisfiyye coins and 1,000 cedit-i rubiyye coins, were sent to Mehemmed Hasan Khan as a means of currying favor. In this way, measures were taken to obstruct Erekli Khan's plan to station Russian troops in the Ganja fortress. Meanwhile, after obtaining sufficient support from Lezgian forces, Suleyman Pasha succeeded in breaking the siege conducted by Erekli Khan and the Russian troops accompanying him (5, BOA, HAT., nr. 4/94G, 4/94M).

Although Russia and Erekli Khan had been expelled from the Ganja Fortress, concerns within the Ottoman Empire and among the regional khanates regarding a potential Russian invasion continued to grow. In this context, it was assessed that Russia and Erekli Khan might launch an offensive against the Azerbaijani khanates and the Fortress of Erivan. These concerns intensified when reports reached Istanbul indicating that Erekli Khan had completed preparations to conduct a military operation in the region by reinforcing his ammunition and supplies. Although the Ottoman Empire could not officially intervene due to the binding terms of the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca, it sought to counter Russia's expansionist intentions by encouraging unity among the khans through the mediation of Suleyman Pasha. Moreover, communications were established-also through Suleyman Pasha- with Iran, which was likewise disturbed by Russia's activities in the region (5, BOA, HAT., nr. 4/94B, 4/94I, 4/94M). As a result of these diplomatic efforts, Iran joined the alliance formed by the Azerbaijani khans and sent an envoy to Istanbul, expressing its willingness to take the necessary steps against Russia and Erekli Khan (5, BOA, HAT., nr. 4/94I).

In accordance with the proposals put forward by Mehemmed Hasan Khan, the Khan of Shaki and Shirvan, Suleyman Pasha undertook precautionary measures against a potential Russo-Erekli Khan offensive targeting Erivan. As part of these efforts, 100 kantars (approximately 5,645 kilograms) of gunpowder and 30 kantars (approximately 1,693 kilograms) of lead were dispatched from the Erzurum Fortress garrison to Cildir. The transportation costs, amounting to 570 kurus, were covered by the customs superintendent of Erzurum (1, BOA, AE.SABH.I., nr. 314/21126; 15, p. 317-320). Owing to the failure of the Russo-Erekli Khan alliance to achieve its objectives in Ganja, and due to the effective countermeasures implemented under the leadership of Suleyman Pasha - who succeeded in uniting the khans of Azerbaijan and Dagestan- no military action was undertaken against Erivan during this period. However, in the following years, Erekli Khan of Tbilisi advanced on Erivan, citing the non-receipt of the annual tribute from the Khan of Erivan as justification, and proceeded to plunder seven or eight surrounding villages. In response, Suleyman Pasha dispatched his mühürdar (keeper of the official seal) to Erivan in an attempt to mediate the conflict between the two khans. Husayn Ali Khan, the Khan of Erivan, expressed-via the mühürdar - his willingness to reconcile and compensate for the damages caused by Erekli Khan. However, this proposal was rejected by Erekli Khan, and Suleyman Pasha's efforts ultimately failed to bring about a resolution (2, BOA, A.{AMD., nr. 21/28).

While local rivalries among the Azerbaijani khanates persisted, the activities of Suleyman Pasha—who had effectively become the eyes and ears of the Ottoman Empire in the region, in line with the Empire’s policy of close regional engagement—intensified further. In this context, the disputes among the khans of Derbent, Shaki-Shirvan, and Shusha-Karabakh were described in detail in one of Suleyman Pasha’s reports to the Sublime Porte. According to Suleyman Pasha, Fathali Khan of Derbent, Husayn Khan of Shaki and Shirvan, and Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Shusha and Karabakh had long been entangled in deep-seated hostilities dating back several years. At one point, Ibrahim Khalil Khan summoned the son of Husayn Khan under the pretense of assigning him to a diplomatic mission but subsequently imprisoned him. The Khans of Garadagh and Baku, having been manipulated under various pretexts, also contributed to the unrest. In response, unwilling to remain passive, Fathali Khan and Husayn Khan assembled substantial military forces and launched a campaign against Ibrahim Khalil Khan. However, as a result of provocation by Husayn Khan’s uncle, Hacı Abdulkadir Bey, Ibrahim Khalil Khan managed to carry out a surprise nighttime assault and succeeded in killing Hüseyin Khan. Following this victory, Ibrahim Khalil Khan grew increasingly arrogant. Emboldened by his success, he dispatched his brother-in-law, Nazar Ali Khan of the Shahsevan tribe, along with a sizable force to Resht—a city under the jurisdiction of Gilan—with the objective of bringing it under his control. Further advancing his ambitions, Ibrahim Khalil Khan reinforced Nazar Ali Khan’s forces and directed them against Najafkuli Khan, the Khan of Tabriz. However, this campaign failed to achieve its objective. Najafkuli Khan escaped the siege, fled to the fortress of Khoy, and sought protection from Ahmad Khan of Khoy. As the fall of Tabriz appeared imminent, it was reported to the Sublime Porte that Ahmad Khan and Najafkuli Khan had appealed to Erekli Khan of Tbilisi to intervene and mediate in order to halt Nazar Ali Khan’s advance (6, BOA, HAT., nr. 6/203A).

Among the various reports submitted by Suleyman Pasha to the Sublime Porte was information regarding a military campaign initiated by Umma Khan, one of the rulers of Dagestan, against Fathali Khan—an action aligned with the strategic interests of the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, detailed deliberations were held concerning a potential alliance between Umma Khan and Ibrahim Khalil Khan, the Khan of Karabakh and Shusha, which would involve a coordinated campaign toward Tbilisi. However, it was underscored that the final decision regarding the formalization of this alliance would require the directive of the Sultan. According to a royal note issued by Sultan Abdulhamid I, Huseyin Bey—the envoy of Salih Bey, Suleyman Pasha’s son-in-law—had submitted reports derived from intelligence operations conducted in the regions of Azerbaijan and Dagestan. These reports extended beyond the Caucasus, encompassing developments along the Hamadan–Isfahan axis and offering valuable insights into affairs in Iran (6, BOA, HAT., nr. 6/203A; 26, p. 257). In response, the Sultan (Abdulhamid I) instructed that deliberations (*mesveret*) concerning the possible alliance and coordinated movement of Ibrahim Khalil Khan and Umma Khan toward Tbilisi should proceed in light of the intelligence received (3, BOA, A.{AMD., nr. 23/56). Furthermore, Sultan Abdulhamid I ordered Suleyman Pasha to pay special attention to the territories inhabited by the Dagestanis and Lezgins. Closely monitoring the developments, Suleyman Pasha notified the Sublime Porte of his intention to dispatch spies to the region via covert channels in order to gather and relay more comprehensive intelligence (4, BOA, A.{AMD., nr. 25/60).

The report submitted by Suleyman Pasha to Istanbul on July 6, 1784, contains extensive details regarding the proposed alliance with the regional khanates aimed at ensuring the security and stability of the area. This document served as a strategic guide

for Suleyman Pasha's efforts to establish contact with the local khanates and secure their cooperation. According to the report, the Russians-acting as the vassals of Erekli Khan of Tbilisi had committed to dispatching a designated number of troops and ammunition via the Ananuri route. In response, the khans of Azerbaijan sent an envoy to Tbilisi with a threatening message, warning that any acts of raiding or pillaging targeting the city would be regarded as direct aggression against Russia. These reports were relayed to Bayezid District Governor (Mutasarrif) Ishak Pasha, Erzurum Governor Darendeli Mehmed Pasha, and Cildir Governor Suleyman Pasha. Upon verifying the accuracy of the intelligence, these officials promptly took action. Consequently, the Sublime Porte instructed Suleyman Pasha to unite the khans and peoples of Azerbaijan and Dagestan under the banner of Ittihad-ı Islam (Islamic Unity), urging them to form a common front against Russian expansion. In support of this initiative, official orders were issued to the khans of Azerbaijan and Dagestan, encouraging their participation in the proposed alliance. To further promote unity, diplomatic gifts were sent from Istanbul via Suleyman Pasha to Ahmad Khan of Khoy in an effort to secure his involvement in the coalition (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 3, 27/1288).

2. The Role of Suleyman Pasha and the Alliance of the Ottoman Empire with the Azerbaijani Khanates

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the positions of the regional khanates and the nature of the cooperation developed between Erekli Khan of Tbilisi and Russia, Suleyman Pasha appointed Halil Efendi, a trusted member of the ulema, to conduct a diplomatic mission. Halil Efendi undertook an extensive journey, visiting the khans of Azerbaijan individually and participating in their private councils to gather their views. The information collected through these interactions was later transmitted to Istanbul via Suleyman Pasha's treasurer, Ibrahim Efendi. Halil Efendi's primary objective was to establish an alliance between Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Karabakh and Ahmad Khan of Khoy in order to secure the support of all Azerbaijani khanates for the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, his first visit was made to Ahmad Khan of Khoy. Halil Efendi remained there for two nights, during which he discussed the matters conveyed by Suleyman Pasha in the khan's private council. Given that the khanates of Khoy and Karabakh had familial ties through intermarriage, forming an alliance between them did not prove particularly difficult. Responding positively to the call for alliance, Ahmad Khan of Khoy declared that he, along with Utsmi Khanzade Ali Bey from the Dagestani nobility, Ali Sultan – the brother of Cankatay Ahmad Khan- Shamkhalzade Has Polad Bey, Nevsal Mehmed Khanzade Surkhay Bey, Ali Iskender Bey, and the Bey of Anzurey, as well as approximately 10,000 Lezgian troops, would place themselves under the command of Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Karabakh. He documented these commitments in a letter and dispatched it with a trusted envoy accompanying Halil Efendi (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 3, 16/720, leff 2).

Following this, Halil Efendi proceeded to visit Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Karabakh, one of the most prominent and respected khans in the region, particularly noted for his military capabilities. The discussions during this visit were held in Ibrahim Khan's private council at the Shusha Fortress and included the participation of Karabakh's leading figures. The meetings extended over five days, during which matters of considerable importance were addressed laying the foundational principles for an alliance to be formed in response to the Russian threat. When Halil Efendi conveyed the concerns surrounding the geopolitical situation, Ibrahim Khalil Khan responded by citing a portion of verse 59 from Surah An-Nisa of the Quran (16, p. 97-98), which calls for obedience to those in authority. He affirmed that, in accordance with this divine

injunction, the khans would unite and act in concert against the looming danger. The underlying objective was to mobilize the Muslim khans under the leadership of the Ottoman Empire -the most powerful state in the Islamic world at the time- in collective resistance to Russian expansion. Ibrahim Khalil Khan further declared that should the Ottoman Empire entrust him with such a mission, he would carry it out with full commitment and honor (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 1, 16/720, leff 2).

Continuing negotiations with the Khan of Karabakh on behalf of Suleyman Pasha, Halil Efendi secured additional assurances from Ibrahim Khalil Khan during the course of their discussions. Ibrahim Khalil Khan expressed that he had long cooperated harmoniously with both Suleyman Pasha and Bayezid District Governor (Mutasarrif) Ishak Pasha, underscoring the enduring strength of their relationship. As a testament to this well-established alliance, he entrusted one of his most reliable men, Molla Mehmed Efendi, to accompany Halil Efendi on the remainder of his mission. Molla Mehmed Efendi's duties were to accompany Halil Efendi on his visits to the other Azerbaijani khanates, to convey Ibrahim Khalil Khan's allegiance to the Ottoman Empire, and to assist in persuading the other khans to collaborate with the Ottomans (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 1). Furthermore, Ibrahim Khalil Khan informed Ahmad Khan of Khoy of the content of his discussions with Halil Efendi, thereby reinforcing the unity of purpose among the allied khanates (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 2).

On the other hand, efforts were also made to put an end to the internal conflicts among the regional khanates. For instance, in the face of the rising Russian threat, Utsmi Khan attempted to mediate the intense dispute between Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Karabakh and Fathali Khan of Derbent and Quba, stating that "enmity and hostility among us are not befitting for the people of Islam" and sought to bring it to a close (21, p. 217).

Following this meeting, Halil Efendi's travel itinerary was finalized. Accordingly, Halil Efendi, accompanied by the envoy he had dispatched to the Karabakh Khanate, Ibrahim Khalil Khan, proceeded to meet with the rulers of Shaki and Shirvan, namely Mehmed Hasan Khan, Agasi Khan of Shamakhi, and Mehmed Said Khan. After establishing the necessary diplomatic contacts in these regions, he, now joined by additional representatives appointed by these khans, continued on to visit Fathali Khan, the Khan of Derbent and Quba. The brother of the Tabriz Khan, who was related by kinship to both Ahmad Khan of Khoy and Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Karabakh, as well as the khans of Urmia and Nakhchivan -who held considerable influence across the region were also under their authority. Ahmad Khan of Khoy, whose domains encompassed Ardabil and its environs, had communicated that he was awaiting assistance from the Ottoman Empire and warned that, should this support fail to materialize, he would be left with no alternative but to submit to Russian authority (21, p. 217).

During these diplomatic engagements, concerns over road security prevented the detailed documentation of the information gathered. Consequently, Fathali Khan, the Khan of Derbent and Quba, refrained from including all the specifics regarding the measures to be taken in his letter. Instead, he conveyed the details verbally to Halil Efendi. In contrast, the khans of Shaki, Shirvan, and Shamakhi sent a written communication to Suleyman Pasha, in which they outlined all the principles they had agreed upon in comprehensive detail (21, p. 217-218).

According to the information Halil Efendi gathered from the rulers of Shaki and Shirvan, Mehmed Hasan Khan, the Khan of Tbilisi, Erekli Khan, had long been under their authority. Moreover, based on Halil Efendi's observations, Erekli Khan harbored apprehensions solely toward Mehmed Hasan Khan. However, at this time, Erekli Khan had fallen under Russian influence, and due to internal strife within the

Shaki and Shirvan Khanates, these rulers were no longer capable of exerting any effective control over Tbilisi. In assessing the situation, Halil Efendi recommended that the Ottoman Empire extend its support to Mehmed Hasan Khan against Erekli Khan and provide the necessary supplies and logistical assistance. Meanwhile, it appears that Mehmed Hasan Khan was informed of developments in Ardahan and had duly communicated this intelligence to Suleyman Pasha. According to the information transmitted by Mehmed Hasan Khan, Russian merchant ships operating in the Caspian Sea had been ordered to consolidate their cargoes onto a single vessel, while the emptied ships were to be loaded with flour and other provisions and dispatched toward Babulebvab (Derbent). Nevertheless, the Russians had not yet established any fortifications in the area. Only a single Russian ship, equipped with sixteen cannons, was reported to have been sighted in the region. From that point onward, responsibility for ensuring the continuous flow of intelligence regarding developments in these regions was entrusted to Mehmed Hasan Khan, the Khan of Shaki and Shirvan (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 1).

According to more detailed information relayed by Mehmed Hasan Khan to Istanbul, Halil Efendi remained there for five days and engaged in extensive discussions within the private council of the Khan on the matters that Suleyman Pasha had communicated to him. The document indicates that Abdullah Efendi, Ismail Efendi, and Haci Mirza Mehmed, who were regarded as the “trusted confidants” of Mehmed Hasan Khan, were present during these deliberations. The results of these discussions were subsequently conveyed to Istanbul via letter. The letter stated that the rulers of Shaki and Shirvan had long been honored to serve the Ottoman Sultan. It further emphasized that, historically, they had demonstrated their loyalty by supporting the Ottoman Empire in its relations with Iran. The document recounted that when Nader Shah attacked Mehmed Hasan Khan’s father, Haci Celebi Khan, a major battle ensued. Despite suffering heavy losses, with many martyrs from the Shaki and Shirvan Khanates, Nader Shah was compelled to retreat, leaving behind his cannons and ammunition. Following Nadir Shah’s defeat, it was also noted that during the reign of his father, Haci Celebi Khan, the Khan of Tbilisi, Erekli Khan, had been defeated twice -once in Car (Balaken) and once in Ganja- thereby solidifying their superiority (15, p. 255).

Mehmed Hasan Khan conveyed that the Ottoman Empire, in recognition of the services rendered by Haci Celebi Khan, had sent him gifts in accordance with the protocol for imperial visits, symbolically acknowledging his contributions. Following the Treaty of Georgievsk (24 July 1783), it was assessed that the Khan of Tbilisi, Erekli Khan, was intent on seeking revenge by aligning himself with Russia. In pursuit of this objective, Erekli Khan sought to secure Russian support and planned to invade the khanates. To fortify his position, he had the Ananuri road repaired, aiming to establish dominance in the region. In response to these developments, Mehmed Hasan Khan declared his intention to raise an army and make the necessary preparations to ensure that his lands would not remain vulnerable to invasion by Erekli Khan and Russia (BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 2).

Halil Efendi’s next destination after the Shaki and Shirvan Khanates was the Shamakhi Khanate. During his two-day visit to Shamakhi, he held an extensive meeting with the Khan of Shamakhi, Agasi Khan. Additionally, Mehmed Said Khan, Agasi Khan’s brother, also participated in these discussions. Both khans emphasized their affiliation with “Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jama’ah” and reaffirmed their loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan, underscoring the principle of “obedience to the ruler” similar to the stance taken by Ibrahim Khalil Khan of Karabakh. They further stated that they were in

agreement with the arrangements made with the rulers of Shaki and Shirvan. Mehmed Said Khan also mentioned that Russia had concentrated its troops in the fortresses of Kizlyar, Mozdok, and the surrounding areas. According to the account of Surhay Khanzade Mehmed Khan's son, Abdullah Bey, the forces stationed in these fortresses were commanded by "Potemkin's forces" and were estimated to number around 100,000. Russia had dispatched ambassadors to the khans of Dagestan, Shirvan, and Derbent to legitimize its fortifications in the region and to deter any opposition from the khans, presenting various gifts to each of them 20 days before Halil Efendi's arrival. However, the khans did not respond favorably to these ambassadors. When General Potemkin did not receive the anticipated response, he sent an envoy to Derbent and Quba Khan Fathali Khan, along with a jeweled snuff box and some money from the residents of Kizlyar Fortress, including Hacı Mirza Bey. Halil Efendi was informed by the Khan of Shamakhi that this latest Russian initiative had occurred five days prior to his arrival at the court of Quba Khan Fathali Khan (BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 2).

Additional information sent from the Khan of Shamakhi, Agasi Khan, to Suleyman Pasha provided further details regarding Russian activities in Derbent, Baku, Gilan, and other regions of Azerbaijan. Russian ships had appeared several times along the shores of Baku. One of these vessels carried 20 cannons and more than 100 soldiers. Although the exact purpose of the fully equipped Russian ships seen near Baku had not been definitively determined, the most plausible explanation was that Russia sought to assert its dominance in the region. Furthermore, it was revealed that not only the Khan of Tbilisi, Erekli Khan, was cooperating with Russia, but also the Khan of Gilan, Hidayet Khan, had forged close ties with Russia. A tangible manifestation of the agreement between Russia and the Khan of Gilan was the presence of 100 Russian soldiers accompanying Hidayet Khan. In fact, one of Hidayet Khan's close associates even served as the commander of the aforementioned Russian unit. During this period, Erekli Khan also initiated a military campaign against the Azerbaijani khanates. Russia, attempting to infiltrate Ottoman territories through its alliance with Erekli Khan, was ultimately thwarted in its efforts due to the successful defense mounted by the Khans of Shaki and Shirvan. In response to the Russian threat, Celebizade Mehmed Hasan Khan, along with Shusha Khan Ibrahim Khalil Khan and other khans, formed an alliance with the military leaders of Dagestan. Although Russia was unable to achieve its objectives due to unfavorable conditions, it continued to send gifts to strengthen its cooperation with Erekli Khan. According to additional reports from the region, after it became apparent that Mehmed Hasan Khan of Shaki and Shirvan would maintain vigilance over Erekli Khan and the Derbent region, Russia sent gifts to Erekli Khan, including a crown, throne, sword, iron mace (debbuz), an outfitted horse, and a clock. Moreover, Erekli Khan's children were also not neglected, receiving treasure, valuable jewels, and other gifts (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 1).

According to information received regarding the measures taken by the military leaders of Dagestan, who had joined the alliance to counter the activities of Russia and Erekli Khan, Omer Bey, one of the grandsons of Surhay Khan, had assembled over 10,000 armed Lezgian soldiers in the settlement of Carukale, located near Tiflis in Dagestan. However, the number of Lezgins called upon to fortify the region was not limited to this initial figure, and over time, their numbers grew. Omer Bey, who had informed Suleyman Pasha about the fortifications, also clarified the timing and details of their planned actions, explaining the delay in the movement of the cavalry units to the region. He reported that the delay had been caused by the rising water levels of the three rivers along the cavalry's route. Omer Bey assured that the water levels would subside

by June 1785, and once that occurred, the necessary shipments would be completed (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 3).

Suleyman Pasha communicated this situation to Istanbul, reporting that the expenses for the Lezgian tribesmen stationed near Carukale, including their daily allowances and gratuities, would be covered. He also mentioned that the commanders would receive kaftan (hilat), tips, and gifts. Furthermore, Suleyman Pasha provided details on how the issue of their appointments and salaries would be addressed and resolved (BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 3).

After the Treaty of Georgievsk, it is understood that Erekli Khan, who became a strategic ally of Russia in the Caucasus, was protected and guided through Budnasyev, whom he had appointed to his service. Through Budnasyev, Erekli Khan established contact with Suleyman Pasha. During this period, which coincided with Suleyman Pasha's efforts to form alliances with other khans in the region, news reached Suleyman Pasha that Budnasyev was residing in Tbilisi with 3,000 soldiers and was tasked with maintaining order in Georgia alongside Erekli Khan. It was also communicated that if any Ottoman-aligned factions in the Tbilisi and Georgia regions were to commit acts of aggression, the necessary response would be provided. In this context, Budnasyev had been fully authorized by Russian Empress Catherine the Great. In the official letter sent by the Russian representative in Tbilisi to Suleyman Pasha, it was explicitly stated that Erekli Khan was under Russian control, and it was emphasized that if friendship was extended to him, Russia would maintain its friendly relations, but if hostility was shown, Russia would turn into his enemy. To strengthen and secure the bond between Russia and Erekli Khan, two of Erekli Khan's sons (Mirian and Bribe?) were sent as hostages to Empress Catherine the Great. During Russia's process of establishing its presence in Tbilisi, it was also understood that another Captain named Irim was assigned to Erekli Khan's service to protect Georgia. Captain Irim, who had strong ties due to neighborhood law, was involved in efforts to establish a robust cooperation based on these close connections (7, BOA, HAT., nr. 16/720, leff 3, 16/720, leff 2).

In a letter sent by Ahmad Khan, the Khan of Khoy, to Suleyman Pasha in 1785, it was emphasized that Russia, which had already invaded Tatarstan and Poland, should not be allowed to gain an even more advantageous position in the region as a result of its alliance with the Khan of Tbilisi, Erekli Khan. To encourage the khans of the Azerbaijani khanates to unite under the Ottoman Empire and to take up arms against Russia, gifts were sent through Suleyman Pasha's Treasury Clerk (hazine katibi), Ibrahim Efendi. In line with this objective, each of the khans from Dagestan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia received a decorated clock, 1,000 pieces of cedit-i nisfiyye coins, and 1,000 pieces of cedit-i rubiyye coins (12, p. 106-107; 15, p. 214; 18, p. 125-128).

Suleyman Pasha's efforts to establish unity among the khanates were primarily motivated by the threat posed by Russia and Erekli Khan in the region. In the subsequent period, Erekli Khan adopted a more proactive stance, attempting to bring Erivan under his control. However, he would not succeed in this endeavor.

Conclusion

As a result, the Ottoman Empire's heavy defeat in the 1787-1792 war against Russia, which was aimed at reclaiming Crimea, and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Jassy, which resulted in the acceptance of Crimea's annexation by Russia, made the Caucasus an even more prominent target.

The Ottoman Empire's focus on the Caucasus and Azerbaijan regions waned due to the long and burdensome wars that weakened the state's military, financial, and

administrative structure. After the death of Suleyman Pasha, the Governor of Cildir, whom the khans greatly respected, the lack of determination and willingness from the governors who succeeded him led to a decline in the empire's influence in the region. Starting from the early 19th century, Russia's ambitions in the region became more

evident with its annexation of Georgia in 1801, following the death of one of its greatest supporters, the Khan of Tbilisi, Erekli Khan.

In Iran, with the rise of the Qajar dynasty, efforts were made to reassert control over the Azerbaijani khanates. However, between 1804-1813 and 1826-1828, the wars between Russia and Iran concluded with the Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828), which resulted in the complete transfer of control over the Caucasus and Azerbaijan to Russia.

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Резюме

Эмин Унсал

Отношения правителя Чылдыра Сулеймана Паши с азербайджанскими ханствами (последняя четверть XVIII века)

Сулейман-паша занимал пост губернатора провинции Чылдыр (Турция) в последней четверти XVIII века, в один из самых критических периодов Османской империи с точки зрения военных, финансовых и административных вопросов. Когда Сулейман-паша занял пост губернатора, русско-турецкая война 1768-1774 годов, считающаяся одним из важнейших поворотных моментов в истории Османской империи, была уже в самом разгаре. В этот период ему удалось включить ханов Дагестана и Азербайджана в созданную под его руководством союзническую сеть. В то же время предпринимались серьезные усилия по преодолению недостатков оборонительных линий, которые находились в крайне плохом состоянии с точки зрения снабжения и логистики. За время своего правления он приложил серьезные усилия для того, чтобы ханства региона заключили союз с Османской империей против России, которая под руководством Екатерины II пыталась осуществить свои экспансионистские намерения в отношении Крыма, Дагестана и Азербайджана. Сулейман-паша, одна из важнейших фигур, влиявших на региональную политику Османской империи того времени, принял в качестве основного принципа совместные действия с Азербайджанскими ханствами, особенно с Шушинским и Карабахским ханствами, и совместную борьбу против их общего врага – России. По поручению Сулейман-паши Халил Эфенди посетил хана Шуши и Карабаха, Ибрагим Халил-хана, хана Хоя, Ахмед-хана, хана Шеки и Ширвана, Мухаммада Хасан-хана, хана Шамахи, Агаси-хана и Мухаммад-Саид-хана. Заключенный с Азербайджанскими ханами союз и собранные сведения о противнике были вновь переданы Сулейманом-пашой в Стамбул. Потери, понесенные Османской империей в военной и дипломатической областях, создали благоприятные условия для более открытого и решительного проведения Россией своей империалистической политики. Однако после смерти Сулеймана-паши в 1791 году сменившие его администраторы не придали должного значения этому союзу, а продолжающаяся борьба между Азербайджанскими ханствами и отсутствие координации создали условия для более легкого осуществления Россией своей военной экспансии в регионе.

Ключевые слова: *Азербайджан, Османская империя, Азербайджанские ханства, Россия, Иран.*

Xülasə

Emin Ünsal

Çıldır valisi Süleyman Paşanın Azərbaycan xanlıqları ilə münasibətləri (XVIII əsrin son rübü)

Süleyman Paşa Osmanlı Dövlətinin hərbi, maliyyə və inzibati baxımdan ən böhranlı dövrlərindən biri olan XVIII əsrin son rübündə Çıldır əyalətinin (Türkiyə) valisi vəzifəsində çalışmışdır. Süleyman Paşa valilik vəzifəsini üzərinə götürdükdə, Osmanlı tarixinin ən mühüm dönüş nöqtələrindən biri sayılan 1768-1774-cü illər Osmanlı-Rus müharibəsi artıq bütün şiddəti ilə davam edirdi. Bu dövrdə o, Dağıstan və Azərbaycan xanlarını öz rəhbərliyi altında qurulan ittifaq şəbəkəsinə daxil etməyə nail oldu. Eyni zamanda, təchizat və logistika baxımından olduqca zəif vəziyyətdə olan müdafiə xətlərinin çatışmazlıqlarını aradan qaldırmaq üçün ciddi səylər göstərdi. O, bu vəzifədə olduğu müddətdə II Yekaterinanın rəhbərliyində Kırım, Dağıstan və Azərbaycan üzərindəki ekspansionist niyyətlərini həyata keçirməyə çalışan Rusiyaya qarşı bölgədəki xanlıqların Osmanlı Dövləti ilə ittifaq qurması üçün ciddi səylər göstər-

mişdir. Həmin dövr etibarilə Osmanlı Dövlətinin bölgə siyasətinə təsir edən ən mühüm simalardan biri olan Süleyman Paşa, xüsusilə Şuşa və Qarabağ xanlığı başda olmaqla, Azərbaycan xanlıqları ilə birgə hərəkət etməyi və ortaq düşmənləri olan Rusiyaya qarşı birgə mübarizə aparmağı əsas prinsip kimi mənimsəmişdir. Süleyman Paşanın tapşırığı ilə Halil Əfəndi Şuşa və Qarabağ xanı İbrahim Xəlil xanı, Xoy xanı Əhməd xanı, Şəki və Şirvan xanı Məhəmməd Həsən xanı, Şamaxı xanı Ağası xan və Məhəmməd Səid xanı ziyarət etmişdir. Azərbaycan xanları ilə qurulan ittifaq və düşmən haqqında toplanan məlumatlar yenə də Süleyman Paşa tərəfindən İstanbula çatdırılmışdır. Hərbi və diplomatik sahədə Osmanlı Dövlətinin yaşadığı itkilər, Rusiyanın imperialist siyasətlərini daha açıq və güclü şəkildə tətbiq etməsinə əlverişli bir zəmin yaratdı. Lakin Süleyman Paşanın 1791-ci ildə vəfatından sonra onun yerinə gələn idarəçilərin bu ittifaqa kifayət qədər əhəmiyyət verməməsi, Azərbaycan xanlıqları arasında davam edən mübarizələr və koordinasiya çatışmazlığı Rusiyanın bölgədə hərbi fəaliyyətlərini daha rahat şəkildə həyata keçirməsinə şərait yaratmışdır.

Açar sözlər: *Azərbaycan, Osmanlı dövləti, Azərbaycan xanlıqları, Rusiya, İran*

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