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DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSASSINATION OF THE SHAH IN SHUSHA AND SHUSHA'S NATURAL LANDSCAPE BY AHMAD BEY JAVANSHIR

Abstract. This article describes Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar's campaign to Shusha in 1797, his entry into the city, the atrocities he committed there, and his eventual assassination. After Ibrahim Khan abandoned the city, Agha Mohammad Khan entered Shusha without resistance and established a reign of terror over its inhabitants. Executions, crucifixions, eye gouging, and the construction of a tower from human skulls illustrated the tyrant's brutality. Amidst these events, the courage and dignity of Mohammad Bey Javanshir stand out. Agha Mohammad Khan's servants, Safarali Bey and Abbas Bey, having grown weary of his cruelty, devised an assassination plan, which was carried out with the support of Sadiq Khan and Mohammad Bey. Ultimately, Agha Mohammad Khan was killed in his bedroom. At the end of the article, the author poetically and vividly portrays the natural scenery of Shusha. Through references to misty mountains, the Khazineh Rock, underground passages, and legends involving fairies, the strategic and mystical significance of the city is emphasized. This text not only reflects a dramatic chapter in Karabakh's history but also reveals the socio-political landscape of that era and the heroic spirit of its people.

Key words: Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, Shusha campaign 1797, atrocities in Shusha, tower of skull, Mohammad Bey Javanshir.

Introduction. In the spring of 1797, alarming news reached Shusha that Agha Mohammad Khan was once again approaching the city with his countless army. Due to famine and plague, it was no longer possible to remain

in the city; no help was expected from Russia in the near future, and the envoys sent to the Turkish Sultan had returned only with the gifts they had taken, offering no hope of assistance. Therefore, Ibrahim Khan left Shusha with his entourage and went to the Jar-Balakan region.

The captive Agha Mohammad Khan entered this virgin fortress—Shusha—without a fight (in the East, all unconquered fortresses were called «virgin»). The furious Khan felt as if it were all a dream. But once he came to his senses, his joy knew no bounds. Like a wild beast playing with its prey before tearing it apart, Agha Mohammad Khan bestowed lavish robes upon some, and granted others the title of Khan. Yet at the same time, the dungeons were filled with prisoners, and it seemed the people of Shusha could not escape the coming bloody tragedy. On the seventh day of Agha Mohammad Khan's stay in Shusha, a very prominent prisoner was brought before him: Molla Panah, a former close associate of Ibrahim Khan. Given the Khan's repeated fits of rage, a dire fate awaited them...

The interpretation of the main material. Sadiq Khan Sheqayi, Agha Mohammad Khan's chief commander, had also fallen from favor because his relative, Mahammad Bey—who had once terrified the Khan's army—had still not appeared before the ruler. The Khan summoned Sadiq Khan and said:

– “From whom should I seek revenge, Sadiq Khan? Should I not take it from you? Go tell the sisters of Mahammad Bey, in whose house you are staying, that if their brother does not appear before me by evening, I will hand them over to my soldiers—along with all other imprisoned women—for hiding their relatives from me.”

Agha Mohammad Khan's Evening Audience. All those deemed worthy to wipe the dust off the feet of the angry ruler, along with several prisoners, were lined up along the palace walls. They stood in robes, heads bowed, waiting anxiously for a signal from the minister Mirza Shafi to throw themselves face down before the great curtain concealing the Iranian ruler.

Finally, with the air of a savior sent by divine order, Mirza Shafi bowed, dropped to his knees like a camel, kissed the ground, and rubbed his eyes in the dust three times. Everyone followed suit. At that moment, a shrill voice sounded from behind the curtain:

– “Welcome! Hmph... Is Sadiq Khan here?”

– “Yes, at your service!” came the reply.

– “It seems you seek to test my wrath! Have you already forgotten what I told you today?”

– “I remember, Your Majesty! In fact, just as I arrived, I was informed that Mahammad Bey had entered the city through the upper gate with his servants.”

– “Bring him to me!” the same shrill voice shouted from behind the curtain.

The guards, hearing the order, lined up from the palace to Mahammad Bey’s mansion and began calling loudly until Mahammad Bey appeared and stood before the tyrant. Agha Mohammad Khan had begun to play his role. It had been over two weeks since he last punished anyone, so he had accumulated many offenders. When he was informed about the newly brought prisoners, Agha Mohammad Khan ordered the curtain to be opened. He revealed his wrinkled, rage-filled face to the prostrate crowd and shouted:

– “Five of them shall be crucified! As for the sixth one, Ali Mahammad Agha—since he was sent as an envoy to the Sultan of Turkiye by Ibrahim Khan and he is of the Seyyid lineage—he shall be strangled instead.”

A few expert executioners immediately began to strangle him. Showing no fear, he gave himself over like a martyr and hurled curses at the tyrant. The others were bound and placed on crosses, which were then struck from below with axes to end the terrible spectacle. The unfortunate victims cried out in agony; their wails and the tyrant’s merciless commands and curses filled those present with horror and anxiety. The executioners, seeing the crucified men thrashing in pain, carefully struck the crosses to avoid being splattered with blood.

The chief executioner then stepped aside and said to the tyrant:

– “Your Majesty! Should we throw the seventh criminal to the tigers? We’ve run out of crosses, and the animals haven’t eaten today.”

– “Yes,” he replied. “But first, let his head be severed like the others, for tomorrow I intend to build a minaret—higher than any ever seen—out of the criminals’ skulls.”

At that moment, a man approximately forty years old, around 1.80 meters tall, with a strong neck, relatively long arms, stylishly yet simply dressed, blond, and clean-shaven, entered the palace courtyard. He confidently walked straight up to Agha Mohammad Khan, bowed slightly, but did not bow deeply—as if to suggest that was all that was required.

The courtiers, gripped by fear, exchanged ironic glances. Sadiq Khan Shaqaqi, however, threw himself to the ground and addressed Agha Mohammad Khan:

— Your Majesty! This is Mahammad Bey Javanshir¹.

— Yes! The true hero is butcher Mahammad!... There is no soldier in my entire army with such stature. Aren't his eyes truly beautiful? — Agha Mohammad Khan said, addressing Mirza Shafi.

— Yes! Indeed, may I be your sacrifice. Very beautiful, — Mirza Shafi replied, realizing from this hint that the Khan intended to gouge out this unfortunate man's eyes as well.

— Your Majesty! One should hear of a brave man's name, not see his face... — Mohammad Bey responded.

— No, I'm joking. I swear on my master's soul that among such statured men, only Lotf Ali Khan Zahidi, who was a bit shorter than you, comes to mind. By the way, we can continue talking tomorrow. It's already evening. Sadiq Khan! I entrust Mahammad Bey to your care, — the Khan muttered. Then turning briefly to everyone, he said simply: Dismissed, and retreated to his bedroom.

The son of the Khan, Mohammad Hasan Agha, had a nearly ruined estate about a quarter of a verst from the palace where Agha Mohammad Khan was staying. This estate belonged to Mohammad Bey's father, Mehrali Khan, and was also in near ruin. Sadiq Khan and Mahammad Bey silently walked there side by side. Traces of pain were clearly visible on their sorrowful but proud faces. Yet, they tried to hide their suffering from others. When they spoke to each other or to close companions, they could find no words of comfort. The night passed in this way until they were informed that one of Agha Mohammad Khan's courtiers wished to see Sadiq Khan. The men became even more anxious. Safarali Bey, the Khan's chamberlain, entered.

— What news have you brought from His Majesty? — Sadiq Khan greeted him.

— I come with a secret mission; please order everyone to leave the room except Mahammad Bey, — he replied.

Once everyone had left, the visitor glanced around and began to speak:

— Sadiq Khan, you are no doubt aware of the terrible consequences of our ruler's wrath today, and you surely know whom he is targeting. Mahammad Bey, by not handing over your sisters, you may have acted nobly. But, of

1 This historical figure is the subject of many legends, songs, and tales across our land. The people love him so much that even the bravery of others is often attributed to him. For that reason, we will later provide more detailed information about him

course, you also know what awaits you after repeatedly defeating the tyrant's finest troops. No doubt, during your conversation with him, you picked up on some things that do not bode well for you.

— Safarali Bey! — Sadiq Khan objected with fear and disbelief, — Are you in your right mind? Why do you speak such nonsense?

— Yes, Sadiq Khan, I am of sound mind. That's why I've taken the courage to tell you the truth: tomorrow, my fate will be the same as yours.

— Speak clearly then. What happened, and why did the Shah send you to me?

— The Shah didn't send me to you — I came of my own accord. And I came because: as soon as you left, he turned his anger on me and Abbas Bey and swore on his father's grave that tomorrow he would build two minarets of skulls. Atop one will be my skull and Mahammad Bey's, and atop the other, yours and Abbas Bey's. And surely, you know better than I how merciless he becomes once he swears on his father's grave.

— All of this is possible, — Sadiq Khan replied, softening his tone slightly, — but why would he be so angry with you?

— For the same reasons he's angry with you. Don't you know our despot? He unleashes his wrath with brutal cruelty on those under his rule. Ever since we began to distance ourselves from you, he pretended to show us favor. But now, it seems you've completely withdrawn from us. He always suspects that a plot is being prepared against him and suspects we're involved too. I sensed this in his talks with Mirza Shafi. He knows of our past loyalty to you and now, because he harbors suspicions about you, he blames us for not responding to his summons while still in the court.

— I swear to God, — Mahammad Bey interjected, — Safarali speaks the truth, because if he meant harm, he wouldn't be speaking like this. We must think not only about ourselves but about hundreds of other unfortunate souls as well.

— I believe him too, — said Sadiq Khan, — but what can we do?

— Sadiq Khan, this is not your burden, — Safarali interrupted. — Abbas Bey and I will do everything necessary to ensure all our survival. This is not like the past — back then, we were not in danger and such an opportunity did not present itself. All we ask is that you promise not to betray us to the tyrant's supporters. That's why I came to see you.

— We promise, we promise, — Mahammad Bey responded with heartfelt conviction. — Along with my servants, I am ready to sacrifice my life to rid

the world of this butcher. Just show us the way. If he had said even one more harsh word about me today, I would have jumped at him with the dagger hidden beneath my cloak.

— No, no! That would only cause unnecessary alarm. I told you, not to boast but to affirm, I only wanted to hear your promise. As for the rest, do not worry about a thing, — Safarali replied, and then left.

Before Agha Mohammad Khan's servant returns to his master's bedroom, let us take a look at the scenery of Shusha, trying to describe it from historical and topographical perspectives.

Even on a foggy day, anyone standing anywhere in the city looking north, northeast, or southwest would be mesmerized by the stunning view: the swirling mists and dark clouds strike against the dark peaks of the Karabakh mountains, circle around the whitening Caucasus mountains, and scatter upon touching them—sometimes briefly covering their clear silhouette. This breathtaking scene is reminiscent of the view observed by a traveler from a ship approaching the Kırım (Crimea) Peninsula. On stormy days, the ever-foaming, raging white waves appear as if they are about to engulf the ship, making the horizon disappear, lifting the ship skyward—and the peaks of Mount Ayı, Mount Çıtır, and other Crimean summits emerge into view.

To the northeast, the rocky mountains, with their protrusions and towers, resemble legendary giants proudly raising their crowned heads. From the southeast, Shusha is surrounded on both sides by a steep rocky gorge over 200 sazhen in height and about 100 sazhen wide. Atop this gorge stood a beautiful bastion, which Agha Mohammad Khan planned to fill with animal saddles to take the city².

This bastion, built on the other side of the city upon a rock with no visible path, resembles a nest. Though parts of the rock indicate there once was a road leading to it, the people of Shusha claim it was built by *giants* and *fairytale*³ and that countless treasures were hidden there. Hence, the gorge is called the “Treasure Rock.”

2 This bastion was recently destroyed by a man named Karbalayi Muhammad, a treasure hunter. In response to our question, he said he had found long, flat coins, human bones, and other items in the bastion.

3 Giant is a supernatural beings thought to be between humans and devils, fairytale is a supernatural being thought to be between humans and angels

Beneath that bastion, clinging to the rock, is a fortress from which a cold spring flows. In the most perilous times, this fortress served as a safe refuge for the population. On the opposite side of the gorge, directly above the river, the ruins of a stable can be seen. Above, in front of the fortress, there is a cave known as the Shahnazar Cave. It is believed that this cave connects, via an underground passage running beneath the city, to another endless cave located on the other side under the upper gate.

Perhaps the giants and fairies opened this passage under Shusha so that, in case of danger to their companions, they could thread a rope through it, gather the whole city perched on the rock, spread their enormous wings, and ascend to the skies with this precious bounty. Or perhaps the opposite—they would lift the treasure, then cast it down upon the sinful people like the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah...

From the south, when one gazes at Shusha from Mount Girs, the rock on which the city rests appears like a gigantic semi-circular figure, its outlines emerging from the mist, resembling an immense copper cauldron boiling due to the molten rock inside it. It is no coincidence that Agha Mohammad Khan, while exchanging insults with Ibrahim Khan, once said: «So-and-so! You sit inside a cauldron, gripping its handle, and think you are contending with me?! Bravo to you! If you dare, come out and face me!»

Now, dear reader, let us see what the angry despot's servant was boiling in that cauldron.

Safarali quickly returned to Abbas bey and whispered with him. Then both of them hid behind the door of Agha Mohammad Khan's bedroom. From behind the door, they could hear his confused and terrifying words. Abbas bey whispered to his companion that he was talking in his sleep—he had heard these same words several times since his friend had left.

At last, the assassins, invoking God and all the saints for help, unsheathed their swords, stormed into Agha Mohammad Khan's bedroom, and quickly leapt upon him under the faint light of the night lamp.

With great difficulty, Agha Mohammad Khan cries out: “Cursed ones! What are you doing?! You are destroying Iran!” He hastily throws his mace at the attackers. But it was too late — the assassins strike him in the chest and cut off his head.

They listen carefully... All is silent...

Hurriedly, they remove the diamond bracelets (Koh-i-Noor⁴ and Darya-ye Noor⁵) from his wrists and return to their accomplices, who had been anxiously awaiting the outcome of the plot and had been unable to sleep.

Sadiq Khan and Mohammad Bey were in a state of fear and agitation. At times, they listened intently through the window towards the palace where the dreadful event was to occur; at other times, they went out into the yard under various pretexts to get news from their trusted men.

There's a knock at the door.

— “Who is it?”

— “It's us! Open up!”

The assassins of Agha Mohammad Khan, drenched in blood, enter the room bearing the precious items as proof of the killing. “*You can rest easy now!*” they announce.

— “Before we take any decisive action,” Sadiq Khan begins, “we must be absolutely sure the cursed one is dead.”

— “Of course,” says Safarali, joining the conversation, and they all quickly head out.

Conclusion. Due to his mistrust, Sadiq Khan bows submissively and cautiously opens the door to the shah's bedroom. He steps in carefully. Safarali follows swiftly, kicks Agha Mohammad Khan's head with his foot onto the floor, lifts the blanket, and shows the still-warm wounds to confirm the death. Then both of them leave.

Town criers, speaking in Agha Mohammad Khan's name, summon the Shaqqaqi troops throughout the city and announce that the shah is sending them to Iran on an important mission. Meanwhile, Sadiq Khan confides to Mahammad Bey:

— “If by dawn this tragic news spreads everywhere, I won't be able to face Agha Mohammad Khan's men here, nor will I be able to reach the capital in time. But right now, capturing the capital, where all the provinces' treasures are gathered, is of utmost importance. Therefore, I must be the first to reach Tehran and seize control of all power. You, with your brave warriors and fearsome reputation, can easily handle this scattered army.”

4 Koh-i-Noor—The Mountain of Light

5 Darya-ye Noor—The Ocean of Light

Thus, Sadiq Khan and Mahammad Bey parted ways. Sadiq Khan hurried off to Tehran to claim the throne of Iran; Mahammad Bey, under various pretexts, began gathering his supporters and awaited the break of dawn.

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Şəmsə Gülməmmədova (*Azərbaycan*)

ƏHMƏDBƏY CAVANŞİR TƏRƏFİNDƏN ŞUŞADA ŞAHIN ÖLDÜRÜLMƏSİ VƏ ŞUŞANIN TƏBİİ MƏNZƏRƏSİNİN TƏSVİRİ

Bu məqalədə 1797-ci ildə Ağa Məhəmməd şah Qacarın Şuşaya yürüşü, şəhərə daxil olması, orada törətdiyi vəhşiliklər və nəticədə onun sui-qəsd nəticəsində öldürülməsi təsvir olunur. Məlum olur ki, İbrahim xan şəhəri tərk etdikdən sonra Ağa Məhəmməd xan Şuşaya mübarizəsiz daxil olur və şəhər əhalisi üzərində terror hökmranlığı qurur. Məhbusların edamı, çarmıxa çəkilməsi, gözlərinin çıxarılması və kəllələrdən minarə düzəldilməsi kimi vəhşiliklər müstəbidin qəddarlığını göstərir. Bu hadisələr fonunda Məhəmməd bəy Cavanşirin cəsarəti və ləyaqəti ön plana çıxır. Ağa Məhəmməd xanın pişxidmətləri Səfərəli bəy və Abbas bəy onun qəddarlığından cana doyaraq sui-qəsd planı hazırlayır, bu plan Sadiq xan və Məhəmməd bəyin dəstəyi ilə həyata keçirilir. Nəticədə Ağa Məhəmməd xan öz yataq otağında qətlə yetirilir.

Məqalənin sonunda müəllif Şuşanın təbii mənzərəsini poetik və təsirli üslubda təsvir edir. Dumanlı dağlar, Xəzinə qayası, yeraltı keçidlər və pərilərlə bağlı əfsanələr vasitəsilə Şuşanın həm strateji, həm də mistik əhəmiyyəti vurğulanır. Bu mətn təkcə Qarabağ tarixinin dramatik bir səhifəsini əks etdirmir, həm də o dövrün ictimai-siyasi mənzərəsini və xalqın qəhrəmanlıq ruhunu ortaya qoyur.

Açar sözlər: Ağa Məhəmməd Şah Qacar, Şuşa yürüşü 1797, Şuşada vəhşiliklər, Kəllə qülləsi, Məhəmməd bəy Cavanşir.

Шәмсе Гюльмамедова (Азербайджан)
УБИЙСТВО ШАХА В ШУШЕ ПО ИНИЦИАТИВЕ
АХМЕД-БЕКА ДЖАВАНШИРА И ПРИРОДНО-
ГЕОГРАФИЧЕСКОЕ ОПИСАНИЕ РЕГИОНА

В статье описывается поход Ага Мухаммеда шаха Каджара на Шушу в 1797 году, его вход в город, совершённые им зверства и последующее убийство в результате заговора. После того как Ибрагим хан покинул город, Ага Мухаммед хан беспрепятственно вошёл в Шушу и установил режим террора над её жителями. Казни, распятия, вырезание глаз и строительство минарета из черепов демонстрируют жестокость тирана. На фоне этих событий выделяется мужество и достоинство Мухаммед бека Джаваншира. Пищхидметы Ага Мухаммед хана — Сафар Али бек и Аббас бек — устав от его жестокости, разработали план покушения, который был осуществлён при поддержке Садык хана и Мухаммед бека. В итоге Ага Мухаммед хан был убит в своей спальне.

В завершение статьи автор поэтично и выразительно описывает природную красоту Шуши. Через упоминания о туманных горах, скале Хязине, подземных переходах и легендах о феях подчеркивается стратегическое и мистическое значение города. Этот текст не только отражает драматичную страницу истории Карабаха, но и раскрывает общественно-политическую картину того времени и героический дух народа.

Ключевые слова: Ага Мохаммед-хан Каджар, поход на Шушу 1797, зверства в Шуше, башня из черепов, Мохаммед бек Джаваншир.