



The Role of the Ambassadors of Iran and the Netherlands in the Formation and Consistency of Political-Economic Relations between the Two Countries in the Safavid Era

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Abstract: The Safavid era in Iran coincides with the growth of international trade relations and interaction with European East India companies. The Safavid kings wanted to establish relations with the East India Company, especially the Dutch East India Company, for various reasons. The Dutch were able to surpass their European counterparts in their dealings with the Safavid government by using economic, commercial and sometimes political initiatives, and what kept the Dutch ahead of their other European rivals was the commercial approach of the Dutch ambassadors and political representatives in their dealings with Iranian representatives and officials, the Dutch ambassadors and political representatives tried to spend on commercial activities and the opening of trade House in the ports of the Persian Gulf, so that they could monopolize the trade of the East. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to study the role of the ambassadors of Iran and the Netherlands in the formation and consistency of political-economic relations between the two countries. The research method in this article is descriptive-analytical. The findings of the research show that the expansion of Iran's foreign relations with the Dutch government during the reign of Shah Abbas and the gradual access of the political representatives of this government to Iran, led to the prosperity of Iran's foreign trade. Iran's geographical position, was a suitable arena in which ambassadors and businessmen of different countries could pursue their trade goals in the shortest time and at the lowest cost.

Keywords: *Safavids, Netherlands, Persian Gulf, Ambassadors, Trade, Silk.*

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Introduction

Since the 16th century, when the route connecting Iran to the West was closed by the Ottomans and Europeans began to discover the new world and new trade routes, and the colonial era began slowly, the Safavid dynasty emerged. The Safavid dynasty emerged in a period when the era of European domination over other lands had begun, and Europeans were looking for trade and colonization of other countries by crossing the seas, and to achieve this goal, they established their own trading companies called the East India Company, of which the East India Company of England, France, and the Netherlands were among the most famous. Each of these companies wanted to establish a commercial relationship with Iran and surpassed each other in concluding commercial contracts in their favor. Due to the domination of the Portuguese in Hormuz, Shah Abbas first wanted to expel them from Iran, so Iran considered cooperation with these companies as an opportunity to achieve its goal, so it took the path of establishing relations with these companies, including the Dutch East India Company.

Thus, it can be said that the most important reason for the relationship with the Netherlands was the equipping of the navy and the help of the Dutch navy. For this reason, between 1625 - 1631, Shah Abbas Safavid sent envoys to The Hague to attract the support of the Netherlands for Iran in the Iranian-Ottoman wars, and on the other hand, to remind the Europeans of the Iranian silk product and the importance of its exclusivity. The unique quality of Iranian silk had made it a valuable commodity in Europe that was in great demand in European countries. For this reason, along with other countries and most importantly the British East India Company, the Dutch, who had both a long experience in commerce and had a high naval power, from the period after Shah Abbas I until the extinction of the Safavid dynasty, did their best to obtain more commercial privileges from the Safavid government.

On the other hand, the extent of the territory of the Safavid government and the domination of the roads and commercial centers was an extraordinary privilege that was not hidden from the eyes of the Safavid kings, European governments, and merchants, and could help the prosperity of trade between the East and the West.

Problem Statement

The Dutch who entered Iran in 1623, their most important motivation was the Iranian silk trade and competition with England to monopolize the spice trade with Southeast Asian countries. In 1616, European markets were saturated with Asian spices, resulting in a decline in the profits of the spice trade. The Dutch East India Company replaced the spice trade with silk, which was one of the best-selling commodities in the European markets, in such a way that both Iran and the Netherlands wanted a trade relationship with each other in order to be able to secure their interests.

Accordingly, the study of Iran-Netherlands relations with emphasis on the principle of the role of the ambassadors of Iran and the Netherlands in the formation and consistency of political-economic relations between the two countries in the Safavid era forms the main issue of this research. Obviously, many works and researches have been done on this subject in the past, but what may distinguish this research from the mentioned researches is primarily the time range of the article, which includes from the death of Shah Abbas I to the fall of Shah Sultan Hossein, the last Safavid king, which the author has sought to examine the subject in more detail by limiting the scope of the research. The new documents that have been released from the archives have made it possible to provide more recent analyses of the role of the ambassadors of Iran and the Netherlands and to understand some of the hidden and lesser-known aspects of these

relations.

Research Literature

Regarding the Literature of the research, it is worth mentioning that several books and articles have been written about the relations between Iran and the Netherlands in the Safavid period, especially their trade relations, at the top of which is certainly the research of Willem Fleur, a famous Dutch Iranologist and historian, the book "The Dutch in the Persian Gulf and Bushehr" (Fleur, 2011) is one of his most prominent books, which uses reliable reports and documents related to the It was written to the East India Company of the Netherlands. In this book, the author discusses how the Dutch began to form relations with Iran and the reasons for their presence in the Persian Gulf, and then talks about the tumultuous history of the Dutch presence on Khark Island and Mir Mohanna's struggles with them in the era of Karim Khan Zand and finally the dismantling of the company from Iran forever. Another book written by the same author, "The Trade Dispute between Iran and the Netherlands and the Trade of the Netherlands in the Era of the Afsharids and Zandians" (Flor, 1992)

In this book, Willem Fleur reveals the company's long-standing disputes with the Iranian government based on Dutch documents. The book consists of three parts: the first part deals with the history of the company's disputes during the reigns of Shah Abbas I, Shah Safi, and Shah Sultan Hossein and the concessions granted to the Dutch regarding the purchase and sale of silk, the second part is devoted to the continuation of the disputes between the company and the Afsharid and Zand governments, and the third part refers to the company's activities in Bandar Abbas.

Masoumeh Farzaneh Jajarmi (2016) in her master's thesis entitled "A Study of Iran's Relations with the Netherlands, England, and Portugal during the Reign of Shah Abbas I Relying on the Memories of Foreign Tourists" has examined the travelogues of travelers in order to portray Iran's relations with the Netherlands, England, and Portugal during the reign of Shah Abbas I. He considers geographical discoveries and the movement of the West towards the East, the emergence of colonialism and the necessity of awareness of the East, the emergence of competition between European governments, the emergence of capitalism in the sixteenth century, the invasion of capital, capitalists, and the prosperous class of the West, and the strategic importance of Iran and the Persian Gulf as the most important factors in Iran-Europe relations in the Safavid era. The thesis discusses various political, commercial, etc. in the Safavid period.

Parisa Mollazehi (2016) in her master's thesis entitled "A Study of the Business Practices of British, Holland and French East India Companies in Iran in the Safavid Era" has discussed the decisive role of the Safavid government in the global political scene of its time and has examined the business practices and policies of each of the European companies in the political and commercial field. She believes that each of the European companies followed a specific method to achieve their goals in Iran.. The thesis examines the business practices of several companies in Safavid Iran, one of which is the Dutch East India Company.

Neda Sonboli (2011) in her master's thesis entitled "Political-Economic Developments of the Persian Gulf in the Period of the Decline of the Safavids" has discussed the entry of European countries into this region and the issuance of permission to establish trade house on the Iranian coasts and ports, by the powerful Shah of Iran, Shah Abbas, and their domination of this region, after Shah Abbas I, and has shown that the lack of adequate supervision of the successors of Shah Abbas I and the increase in competition between the companies On the one hand, the government's control over the Persian Gulf trade area and the influence of these companies

increased, and on the other hand, it led to widespread Arab revolts on the southern coast of the Persian Gulf. The mentioned thesis in a small section along with other companies has mentioned the role of the Netherlands and it is worth mentioning that the thesis only considers the period of the decline of the Safavids.

Hamideh Abbasi (2009) in her master's thesis entitled "The Journey of Iran's Trade in the Era of Shah Abbas I Safavid" has dealt with the domestic and foreign trade of the period of Shah Abbas I and believes that in evaluating Iran's foreign trade relations in the eleventh century AH / 17th century AD, these relations are qualitatively based on equality with emerging commercial powers such as the Netherlands, England, and France and the powerful neighboring emperors of Iran, including India, the Ottomans, and the Uzbeks have been strong. The thesis deals with domestic trade, and in a small part of the dissertation, it refers to the foreign trade of the Shah Abbas period, and next to it, the Dutch company is briefly mentioned, and it does not provide any new content or analysis in this regard.

"Iran-Netherlands Relations from the Safavid Period to Zand" (Rajaei, 2007) is the title of an article whose author believes that the close competition between the British and the Dutch in trade and the insecurity of the autonomous governments of the Persian Gulf caused Iran to not be able to benefit from trade with the East India Company, and even with the passage of time and Mir Mahna's attacks, the Dutch also preferred to transfer their trade from Iran to the coastal areas of the southern Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

Tayebeh Idrissi (2019) in an article entitled "Investigating the Performance of Foreign Companies and its Impact on the Economic Situation of the Persian Gulf in the Safavid Period (Relying on the Role of Basra Port)" has examined the performance of foreign companies and its impact on the economic situation of the Persian Gulf with regard to the special geopolitical position of the Persian Gulf and the port of Basra.

Bahador Qayem and Amir Rezvantabar (2011) in an article entitled "A Study of Iran-Netherlands Trade Relations in the Safavid and Afsharid Periods" briefly discuss the entry of the Dutch into the Persian Gulf and their trade relations with Iran in the Safavid and Afsharid periods and their commercial ups and downs in one article.

Despite the fact that in the mentioned researches, Iran-Netherlands trade relations have been the focus of researchers' attention, but the role and function of ambassadors and embassies of Iran and the Netherlands in trade relations have been studied less documented, and the present study aims to research and explore this issue.

The Role and Function of the Ambassador's Office in the Safavid Period

Sending ambassadors to the court of other kings is a very old and ancient practice. Ibn al-Fara' considers the letter as the hand and the Ambassador as the tongue. Therefore, he considers sending an ambassador as the best way to express his intention (Ibn al-Fara', 1947: 7). Sabzevari gives two reasons for sending an ambassador: "An envoy should be sent to the opposing king in two ways: one should be from both sides of the path of affection, and it should be approximate, such as congratulations, condolences, and the like. Second, there must have been a purpose and an action whose preparation is dependent on the sending of the ambassador (Sabzevari, 1998: 815).

Ibn al-Fara' also enumerates some characteristics for the envoy. "The envoy must have been a wise man, an eloquent scholar, an eloquent orator, a brave man, a mystic of the customs and rules of the assemblies of kings, who has served kings, traveled extensively, benefited from

knowledge, foresighted, and had a good stature and outlook. And if a man is old and knowledgeable, let him be good. And if he is brave and masculine, and knows the etiquette of armaments, riding, and fighting, he is good (Ibn al-Fara', 1947: 7). Also, the ambassador must be someone who can change things in favor of his ruler; be eloquent, make good use of opportunities, be eloquent, good-looking, sharp-looking, and have an iron heart (Ibn al-Fara', 1947: 10). The ambassador should be the best person for this task, because the sages have said: Three things signify three things. A gift to the donor, a letter to the author, and a letter to the sender (Ibn al-Fara'a, 1947: 13).

The ambassadors chosen by the Safavid court were mostly from among the Qizilbash nobles. The Safavids used skilled and experienced people who had Background of Embassy Affairs for important embassies. As Shah Abbas I sent Muhammad Bey, who had shown great skill in the Indian embassy, to negotiate with the Ottomans, these people, in addition to being among the Diwanis of the center of government, were also the governors and bureaucrats of the provinces or cities (Iskandar Beik, 1377: 2/811). Sometimes, when the king could not choose a person from the capital, he would leave this task to the governors of the provinces (Herbet, No Date: 5). They had more room for advancement than others. Chardin mentions Bodaq Sultan, who went to India during the reign of Abbas II and later succeeded in achieving the position of musketeer (Chardin, 1397: 1734). In the early period of King Suleiman, Budaq Sultan was so powerful that the Dutch ambassador was able to advance his affairs by bribing him to meet with the king and gain privileges (Chardin, 2018: 1659).

The gifts that the ambassador had to bring to foreign officials involved a huge cost, half of which was provided by the royal treasury and the rest by the province under his supervision (Alarius, 1984: 317). The ambassador was accompanied by people who were tasked with writing the report of the trip to the Shah. "They must be with the ambassador who are aware of the truth of the situation and who have written in detail about all the subjects, and if there are many, it is better. The king should consider the details of each of them and by agreeing and disagreeing with each other, and in this regard, he should emphasize in secret that they should not leave anything out of the details and generalities that they should not write or present. It is more likely that the king, before his ambassadors enter his country, when they reach the border, should send a trustee who will bring the details and the reports which they have written to him, so that there will be no way for them to change them according to the appearance of expediency, and everything will really reach the king. (Sabzevari, 1998: 818).

In addition to conveying the Shah's message to other rulers, the envoys were expected to obtain the necessary information about that country while traveling to other countries (Hedayat, 1977: 76). Of course, ambassadors from other countries who come to Iran follow the same method. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent them from mixing with ordinary people, and the ministers must be very careful during negotiations so as not to give them information that would be to the detriment of the government (Sabzevari, 1998: 820).

In the Safavid period, various people were involved in negotiations with the ambassadors of foreign governments according to their status and status. Sometimes they were referred to as "ministers" in general (Kareh, 2008: 95). Although it is said that Shah Abbas personally negotiated with foreign envoys in important matters and did not allow anyone else to interfere in them (Delavaleh, 2001: 312). Or sometimes they themselves asked the Shah to negotiate directly with the Shah (Skanderbeg, 1998: 2/1299). However, even in such cases, the Shah did not refrain from consulting with his relatives and advisors. In this case, before meeting with the king, the ambassadors would inform the king of the subject of their negotiation through the

ministers (Figuro, 1984: 271).

Regarding the ambassadors' negotiations with the Iranian ministers, two factors were effective in the people participating in the talks: a) the atmosphere of the court and b) the type of mission of the ambassador. When Jan Smith, the ambassador of the Dutch East India Company, arrived in Iran at the end of the reign of Shah Abbas I and the beginning of the reign of Shah Safi, he was invited by Molayem Beg to have lunch.

He was also a party to the Dutch contract and they were obliged to deliver their goods to him and receive silk from him (Flor, 1977: 88). In addition, if the ambassador was responsible for concluding a contract or renewing the contract, the Shah would choose one of his confidants to negotiate and the ambassador would deliver his messages and letters to the Shah through him. This person was different from the stewardess (Flor, 1977: 94).

In the course of foreign relations, the ambassador himself was of special importance. European governments tried to send people to Iran who were skilled and from nobles, military and high-ranking politicians, and who were familiar with the principles and customs of foreign ceremonies. In this regard, Kampfner writes: "The ambassadors of the country must be men who are quite distinguished in terms of political grace and understanding, because otherwise, the Persian court will inevitably come to the conclusion that there are no more worthy ambassadors among us [European governments]" (Kampfner, 1984: 267).

Dutch Ambassadors in Iran

The first Dutch ambassador, Hubert Wisnich / Hueber Wisnisch, was sent to Isfahan and Shah Abbas I received the Dutch ambassador with great warmth and kindness and was willing to agree to the Ambassador's Suggestion, despite the strong opposition of the British and their supporters, to a treaty to free Dutch citizens and merchants in Iran and to grant some concessions, including the transfer of the monopoly of silk to that government (November 21, 1623 A.D). However, he was eventually murdered in the Ottoman Empire on his way back to the Netherlands.

After him, the next Dutch ambassador to Iran was Jean Smith, who was appointed to the Iranian embassy at the request of Shah Abbas the Great by the class assembly and the ruler of Batavia, and arrived in Isfahan on May 12, 1629 along with Musa Beik (the Iranian ambassador in The Hague, the old capital of the Netherlands), when four months had passed since the death of the Persian emperor. Jean Smith's main purpose in this mission, according to his own writing, was as follows: "The main purpose of my mission was to convey the degree of friendship and relations of friendship between the two countries. Although my powers were very limited, nevertheless Jean-Peter Cohen (the governor of Batavia) had ordered me to inspect the affairs of the company's agents and employees. Second, I was ordered to provide the means to allow the Iranian government to allow Dutch merchants to import all kinds of goods into Iranian territory as they wished, and also to renew the treaty of 1623 A.D./1033 A.H., which had expired." (Bayani, 1971: 107).

Shah Safi, who took over the reins of affairs after Shah Abbas, received Jean Smith during a war trip to Baghdad on December 11, 1629, but this meeting did not yield any tangible results for the ambassador. The ambassador, who had no supporters in Iran except the governor of Fars, left for Shiraz with the intention that he might be able to get results from his mission through the governor of Fars, but his absence in Shiraz forced him to leave Iran and return to Batavia (June 14, 1630). On the other hand, he was caught up in the opposition of Molaei Beik,



the special secretary of the Safavid Shah.

Molaei Beik had decided to oppose the Dutch ambassador, so he tried with all his might to delay his suggestions and requests, and he brought the matter to a point where all the Dutch goods were stopped in the warehouses, and many of them were spoiled due to the heat. However, since the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf were harassing the merchant ships of Iran and others, the Iranian government made peace with the Dutch ambassador, and even when Jean Smith wanted to leave Iran, Shah Safi sent a letter with him to the Dutch General Assembly. (Bayani, 1930: 36-37).

The other ambassador of the Dutch was Nicolas Overschi, who had signed a contract with the Iranian government during the reign of Shah Safi for the purchase of silk on the same terms as other Europeans. During the reign of Shah Safi, he signed a treaty with Shah Safi in which it was stipulated that the Dutch could buy any amount of silk they wished before other nations, provided that they paid the hundred tomans for each load (Kazban) instead of the seventy tomans they had previously paid for each Kazban (Bayani, 1971: 117).

The other Dutch ambassador was Johann Connaeus, He in 1651 arrived in Iran at the head of a delegation to resolve important differences between Iran and the Netherlands and the issue of buying and selling silk. Following the negotiations between the two sides, an agreement was signed between the two sides for 300 loads of silk per year, each load at a price of 48 Tomans (Freier, 2009: 253/4).

During the reign of Shah Abbas II, the East India Company of the Netherlands in 1666 A.D. sent another ambassador named Hubert Doulers, who was carrying gifts for the Shah of Iran, from Batavia to Iran. The purpose of his mission was to attract the Shah's favorable opinion towards the company and to demand the continuation of his goodwill and to complain about the mistreatment of the governor of Fars province towards Dutch merchants, representatives, and stewards. The gifts that Leres gave to the king and the nobles of the court were worth about 10,000 ecos. The Dutch ambassador was warmly received by the Shah and after a short stay in the court, he left Iran without making any suggestions or demands that would guarantee the interests of the company.

Chardin writes of Leres's journey: "The deceased king (Abbas II), who was still alive at that time, could not have imagined that the trading company would send an ambassador to him with innumerable and precious gifts, without having a definite and specific purpose. On this occasion, he asked the ambassador several times about the purpose of the embassy and his mission. But when he realized that his intention was only to convey the respects and rights of the company's managers and leaders, he decided to do so without prejudice if the ambassador asked him, but unfortunately, the ambassador had neither the wisdom nor the courage to take advantage of the opportunity to obtain many privileges for his masters. Therefore, the ambassador left Isfahan in a hurry, with kindness, and with gifts such as clothes, cloth, a horse, and a sword" (Chardin, 1956: 1/345).

Contrary to Chardin's opinion, the aforementioned ambassador in Ashraf Mazandaran arrived in the presence of Shah Abbas II and obtained a decree on the use of customs exemptions for Dutch imported goods. But Shah Abbas II suddenly died in 1667 and this prevented the departure of the Dutch ambassador. Because at that time, it was customary that after the death of the king, all privileges were revoked in order to be approved by the new king. By offering numerous gifts to the new Shah of Iran and his courtiers, Dulabres was able to get Shah Suleiman to approve the decree of Shah Abbas II. However, the scope of Dutch trade with Iran was gradually

restricted, so that instead of 600 bales of silk a year, only 300 bales were purchased. The reason for this was the Dutch wars in Europe, which prevented them from trading with Asian countries (Houshang Mahdavi, 2535: 121).

In 1686 During the reign of King Suleiman, the Dutch sent their representative, Van Hol, to the Persian court. Van Hol came to the Persian court with a large number of servants and remained with his companions in the capital of Iran for three years. After writing petitions to the court and repeatedly requesting visits, but no one answered him, Van Hull finally got tired and inevitably, after all the expenses he had incurred during his stay in Iran, he incurred other expenses to obtain a leave of absence, returned Qeshm Island, and left Iran with a thousand hardships (Sanson, 1967: 172).

In 1689 A.D. Another ambassador, Johann von Lenen, came to the court of King Suleiman on behalf of the directors of the Batavia Company in order to prevent unfortunate events and resolve misunderstandings. The ambassador's arrival in Isfahan was done with all the glory. He was warmly welcomed by the Shah. Lenin intended to obtain a general discount on the price of silk by means of many offers and gifts to the king and the courtiers. "The Dutch ambassador was verbally promised that they would give a discount on every shipment of 30 Echo silk. However, according to the appearances of the matter, the issue of mitigation was verbal and verbal, and they wanted not to offend the Dutch ambassador on the occasion of the gifts he had given and not to make him sorry and regretful. Although the Dutch ambassador did not refuse to give money and bribes to the ministers, he was never able to get the concessions that had been verbally promised to him on paper" (Sanson, 1967: 187-188).

The result of this embassy can be deduced from a letter written by King Suleiman to the Dutch ruler of India on October 18, 1691 A.D. / 1103 A.H. (Bayani, 1350: 123):

"... We have been informed of the credentials of Johann von Lenin, your eloquent ambassador, who was on a mission to come to us at the glorious and exalted court and renew the treaty concluded between the two governments. We ordered that they give a general discount on the price of silk according to his demand in the same amount as the previous year that had been purchased by Dutch merchants. In addition, the amount of 14,400 Tomans and another amount for taxes and other rights and duties prescribed for exported and imported goods should be given to the Dutch nation as a gift. In addition, we decreed that the stewards of the royal finances should charge the Dutch merchants duties and taxes except for an amount equal to that which was given as a gift. We renewed our previous decree, which needed to be renewed, and agreed that if they had any other demand than what was mentioned in the previous contract, they would declare it so that we could confirm it."

A minor misunderstanding in the translation of the Persian text was about to cause new disputes, but the intervention and mediation of Herbert Duegger and Luckagton, the company's directors in Iran, resolved the misunderstanding. Agents of the Dutch Trading Company in 1700 Affected and upset by the actions of the Iranian government, they sent another ambassador to the court of Shah Sultan Hussein to obtain permission to trade silk again. Upon his arrival in Gomberoon, the new ambassador, Hugh Comer, was threatened by the head of the customs of this place with the threat of severing relations if the company did not pay the customs duties to the Iranian government during the years when they refused to buy silk and imported other goods. In response to the threat of the head of customs, Hog Comer made the following decisions (Bayani, 1971: 125):

1. Payment of taxes and customs duties for an amount equal to one thousand and



two hundred tomans of goods, provided that the king allows two hundred bags of forty-four tomans per bag of silk to be exported in the same year.

2. Agrees to give to the king as an offering the taxes and customs duties of the year that the Dutch did not export silk.

3. Agrees to pay to the Prime Minister the sum of three hundred tomans for the decree issued by the Shah granting permission.

Relations between the governments of Iran and the Netherlands continued at this level until 1715 that representative from Iran named Mohammad Ja'far Beik arrived in Batavia with orders from the Shah to manage the affairs of the company in Iran. The trading company also decided to send a representative to Isfahan in turn. The person chosen for this mission was John Joshua Catlar, a high-ranking member of the Dutch East India Company in India.

The next Dutch ambassador, Catelar, arrived in Bandar Abbas in early October 1716 along with a number of employees of the Dutch East India Company. Catelaar began his official mission on July 11 with a series of negotiations. First, he negotiated with Motamed al-Dawla Fath Ali Khan Dagestani, and then he negotiated with both Mostofi Khasa and Motamed al-Dawla (Flor, 1978: 774).

Catelar asked for a renewal of the previous treaty, which had been signed by the Dutch ambassador Hogg Comer in 1701. had been concluded, but Fath Ali Khan considered the contract to be terminated, and then other problems arose over the sums of money owed to the Shah by the representative of Peter Maccar's company. However, on August 29, Catelaar succeeded in obtaining five decrees and was also able to renew all previous concessions and previous contracts. At this time, although Ketlar had achieved all his goals, the Iranians had not achieved their goal. The Iranian government's demand, apart from the navy, was the Dutch war against the sheikhdom of Muscat, which had recently captured the islands of Bahrain, Qeshm, and Khark and had besieged the island of Hormuz. Catlar had politely responded positively to Iran's demand, but in practice he lacked the full power to support Iran (Flor, 1978: 775). By this time, the Arabs had captured Bahrain and Gomberoon was in danger. The chancellor summoned Catelaar and asked him to help the Iranian military forces with two warships to retake Bahrain, but the ambassador replied frankly but politely that he was not allowed to do so.

Iranian ambassadors in the Netherlands

Before introducing the Iranian ambassadors, it should be noted that in the despotic system and absolute monarchy of Iran in this period, the Shah was at the top of the pyramid of political power, and there was no sphere outside the field of political power that could be called the public sphere and public interests. The country and all its affairs were the absolute property of the Shah. In addition to monopolizing political power, Shah Safavid also had a monopoly on the trade of most of Iran's exported goods, and this led to the emergence of neither an independent merchant class to pave the way for cultural exchange along with the exchange of goods for its own profits, nor the emergence of ambassadors and politicians aware of public and national interests in this field. The few ambassadors who went to the embassy during this period, as usual, were special servants of the Shah and not people who were aware of the national interests, which in any case could not emerge due to the political structure and intellectual development of Iran at that time.

In the hope that he could find an ally for himself by sending ambassadors, in order to attract friendship and strengthen the relations between the governments of Iran and the Netherlands,

Shah Abbas decided to send an ambassador to the Netherlands, and on this occasion, he sent one of his courtiers, Musa Beik, to The Hague, the capital of the Netherlands, with orders. In this way, Shah Abbas sent a political delegation to the Netherlands with his political and commercial initiative. Probably, Shah Abbas realized that the presence of British and Dutch companies in Iran would create a balance in the country and was very appropriate and desirable for Iran. Therefore, he decided to deal equally with both countries, and if he could conclude a treaty with the Netherlands, he would secure his interests with England accordingly (Freire, 2009: 4/243).

This delegation headed by Musa Beik arrived in the Netherlands on February 9, 1626. The Iranian ambassador entered into negotiations with the class assembly in accordance with the decree of Shah Abbas and presented the Suggestions of the Iranian government in a letter to that assembly as follows:

The king of Iran asks the class assembly to withdraw its ambassadors and political and economic representatives from the Ottoman Empire as soon as possible. Because the Dutch have no freedom of action in this empire at all, while in Iran they can do their business with complete freedom. The Shah would allow the Dutch to move freely throughout the country of Iran and engage in trade. The king of Iran reminds the Dutch government that in order to protect the interests of the Dutch in the Persian Gulf, he entered into a war with the government and the king of Spain and took the island of Hormuz, the port of Gomboron, and the island of Qeshm out of their hands.

Thus, it allows Dutch ships to move freely in the Persian Gulf. Since some areas in the Persian Gulf, such as Muscat, Lark, etc., are still in the hands of the Spaniards, and in this way, the Dutch trade and interests may be harmed, the Iranian government is ready to sign a treaty with the Dutch government under the same conditions that it has signed with the British for the capture of Hormuz, and with the help of each other, by land and sea, the aforementioned positions and fortifications will be taken over the Spaniards. (Bayani, 1970: 112-113)

The Persian Suggestions were submitted to the class assembly by Musa Beik on April 26, 1626, but the parliament deferred the answer to the consultation and comments of the directors of the East India Trading Company. The response given to the Iranian ambassador was as follows:

The mission given by the Supreme Council to the directors of the East India Company in pursuit of the Suggestions of the Iranian ambassador on April 26, after a thorough discussion and consideration, concluded that the directors of the company believe that the said Suggestions do not in any way benefit the company, because a treaty was signed with the Iranian government some time ago, which has sufficient privileges and precisely meets the views of the company, and regarding the summons. The Dutch representatives and agents from Turkey cannot be answered because this issue has nothing to do with the nature of the matter, but in the case of military intervention, the company officially declares that in addition to the fact that intervention in the war is extremely difficult and involves enormous expenses, there can be no political or economic benefits for the company. (Bayani, 1970: 113).

However, the response of the class assembly did not disappoint the Iranian ambassador and tried at various stages to attract the favorable opinion of the class assembly in accepting the Suggestions of the Iranian government. There are many documents in the Hague archives that indicate the length of the negotiations between the Dutch government and the Iranian ambassador, but unfortunately, due to Musa Beik's lack of knowledge and familiarity with the Dutch language and the lack of an Expert Translator who could translate the correspondence and negotiations for the ambassador, his mission was abandoned. Ultimately, when Musa Beik was



disappointed with the result and could not accept his king's Suggestions to the class assembly and the Dutch rulers, he left for Iran on March 12, 1627 Accompanied by Jean-Pi Berzquene, the ruler of Batavia.

Musa Beik's mission lasted three years from his arrival in The Hague until his arrival in Isfahan and did not achieve the desired result that the Persian emperor expected from it, especially helping to definitively expel the Spanish and Portuguese from the Persian Gulf and damage the Ottoman trade and economy. Also, Musa Beik's lack of knowledge about the political situation at that time, especially his illiteracy and inexperience in the serious affair that was entrusted to him, was an effective factor for this failure.

Thus, Shah Abbas's ambassador not only did not know the language of the host country, but he also had very little knowledge of the Persian language. After referring to the failure of the ambassador's negotiations with the Dutch company, Willem Fleur writes: "If Musa Beik had continued with his embassy according to plan, his mission would not have been so unsuccessful, but since his drunkenness and promiscuity with women and the harassment he caused to the company's board of directors on a daily basis had become unbearable, and his stay in the Netherlands was useless, the company decided to Preparations were made for Musa Beik's return and his dispatch to his country" (Flor, 1977: 49).

After the failure of Musa Beik and according to the wishes of the Emperor of Iran, he assigned the class assembly of the ruler of Batavia to send an ambassador to the court of Isfahan. The ruler of Batavia also chose Jean Smith for this task and sent him to Iran with the necessary orders. Smith accompanied by Musa Beik, who was waiting in Surat (in India) for the arrival of the Dutch ambassador. On May 12, 1629, he arrived in Isfahan, while a few months had passed since the death of Shah Abbas.

During the reign of Shah Sultan Husayn, in 1715, an ambassador named Muhammad Ja'far Beg also went to Batavia to inform the East India Company that silk would no longer be sold to them because they did not send gifts, so against the company sent Catlar to Iran (Houshang Mahdavi, 2535: 122).

It is said about Mohammad Reza Beik that he was a violent, fanatical and expectant man, but most of his works were to show the greatness of Iran and the superiority of his position over other ambassadors and representatives of other countries (Tajbakhsh, 1974: 22).

In a treatise, Maurice Herbert examines the adventures of Mohammad Reza Beik's journey and his ignorance of the etiquette of diplomacy and writes: "In the eyes of the Ambassador, when his ministers and the Shah himself knew nothing more about Europe than the Moon, what could be the importance of the government and morality of the French? What was the use of disrupting habits in order to satisfy vain curiosity and to acquire knowledge that was not important to the Iranian court? Wouldn't it be better or wiser for him to smoke his hookah comfortably, meditate on the Qur'an, and buy objects and textiles that will attract the affection of his elders when he returns?" (Herbert, 1907: 204, quoted in Tabatabai, 1998: 61).

Results

At the end of the 16th century, the Dutch had more than 10,000 ships and 160,000 sailors, and their advance had reached as far as Japan. By owning almost all the ships that sailed the coast of Europe, they were able to monopolize the trade of most of Central and Northern Europe. From the arrival of forty Dutch ships on the island of Hormuz during the reign of Shah Abbas until the end of the Safavid period, the Dutch were still the best buyers of Iranian silk. For this reason,



various contracts were signed between Iran and the Netherlands in all Safavid periods

The Dutch East India Company, which had found Iran an important market for the sale of Indian goods and also realized the importance of its silk, sought to communicate with the Iranian court in various ways and enter into commercial transactions with Iran, so they sent their request to the court of Shah Abbas Safavid and asked him to be involved in Iran's trade, especially in silk trade, with other governments Partners. Shah Abbas, as he wanted a new ally in order to use his naval power to create a balance of power with other European companies, immediately accepted the Dutch offer by making several concessions. Gradually, the Dutch company gained a firm foothold in Iran and the commercial transactions of the Safavid court and obtained many of the privileges of the English company. It was not long before they became the only importers of spices to Iran. They sold spices and bought silk, and they made a lot of profit from the favorable trade balance they had established with Iran. The Dutch bought a certain amount of silk from the Shah annually at a rate higher than the market price, and in return, they were free to trade and exempt from paying customs duties.

In order to achieve their goal, which is the lucrative silk trade and also to eliminate their competitors, the Dutch sent various ambassadors to Iran during different periods of the Safavid dynasty, and most of them succeeded in concluding good contracts for their own interests and obtaining various privileges such as customs exemptions. This can be attributed to the wisdom and expertise of some Dutch ambassadors and the ability of Dutch agents.

On the other hand, although the Safavid kings gave good concessions to the Dutch and occasionally benefited from the silk trade, they were unsuccessful in concluding contracts to use the Dutch navy to crush rivals and quell the rebellion of the rebellious governors of southern Iran, such as Muscat. The Dutch never helped the Iranians in this regard. This can be attributed to the lack of proper knowledge of the economic and political situation of Western countries such as the Netherlands, the lack of knowledge of the world situation, the lack of wisdom of Iranian ambassadors and ministers, as well as the existence of corruption and bribery in the Iranian court, which the Iranians were practically unable to benefit from these treaties.

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