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“BATTLE OF CHALDIRAN” – A UNIQUE SAMPLE OF EUROPEAN FINE ART

Abstract. The famous Battle of Chaldiran took place between the Ottomans and the Safavids in August 1524. The battle ended with heavy losses on both sides and resulted in the victory of the Ottoman Empire. The Battle of Chaldiran is reflected in Safavid and Ottoman miniatures, also in European written sources. But, the painting “Battle of Chaldiran”, which describes the battle, is a unique sample of European fine art and it is preserved in Palermo, Italy now. The author and date of creation of the painting are unknown. We will try to investigate the work “Battle of Chaldiran” in this article.

Key words: Shah Ismail, Battle of Chaldiran, Cristoforo Castelli, Palazzo Mirto, Ottoman-Safavid battles.

Introduction. A fierce battle took place between the Ottomans and the Safavids near Khoy on August 23 (in some sources 24), 1524. The battle ended with heavy losses on both sides and resulted in the victory of the Ottoman Empire. Although the Battle of Chaldiran was not a decisive result for the future of the Qizilbash, it dealt a serious blow to the Safavids’ military and political prestige and ended with the loss of certain territories. There is various information about the war in different sources. Almost all historical sources state that the Ottoman army was many times larger than Shah Ismail’s army [6].

Besides this, it is known that the wide use of firearms played a decisive role in the victory of the Ottomans. The battle is usually presented as an example of the effectiveness of firearm technology in textbooks. The Ottoman

army was armed with 500 artillery pieces besides janissaries and although the Safavid army had previously used firearms, there were no firearms in the battle of Chaldiran and consisted only of lightly armed cavalry archers [2].

As we mentioned earlier, Paolo Giovio wrote about the battle of Chaldiran in one of his works, or rather in "*Commentario de le cose de' Turchi*" written for Emperor Charles V. The book, which was published in Rome in 1531, deals with encounter of Sultan Selim's army of 200 thousand, most of which were cavalries, with Ismail Sophy's army between Khoynak and Tabriz (*goes like Tauris in the work*), on the Chaldiran Plain in 1514. He noted that Ismail had a beautiful cavalry army that you could not see anywhere else in the world, but that the cavalry was armed with daggers and there was no artillery [5].

The result of the battle of Chaldiran does not reduce the importance of Shah Ismail I's personality for the history and statehood of the Azerbaijani people. As academician R.Mehdiyev said: "Regardless of the results of the battle of Chaldiran, Shah Ismayil's genius and his services for the Azerbaijani people are undeniable" [7]. As a result of the battle of Chaldiran, the Safavid dynasty was not collapsed, the state did not suffer great territorial losses and Ismail remained on his throne for a long time, or rather until his death.

There were legends about the Qizilbash for their bravery and courage during the battle and even rumors about Ismail I's victory in Europe immediately after the battle. If we take into account the "distance" between Europe and Iran in the 16th century and in addition, the extremely slow spread of information, it can be said that the post-war information reached Europe a few months later. When foreigners heard rumors about the battle of Chaldiran, they spread the news in Europe.

The painting "Battle of Chaldiran". There are several miniatures describing Shah Ismail I's military campaigns, battle and hunting scenes, including the battle of Chaldiran. But, the only painting in European fine arts describing the battle of Chaldiran is preserved in the Mirto Palace (*in ital. Palazzo Mirto*) House Museum in Palermo, in the south of Italy (Pic. 1.). The Mirto Palace was once the property of a noble family and now opens its doors to visitors as a house museum. A large, multi-figured painting is exhibited in the Tapestry Hall (*in ital. Salone degli Arazzi*). There is no information about the author of the work. According to the work technique, the author of the work is believed to be a German or Northern European artist. It is also supposed that this work is based on the memoirs of a person who took part in the battle of Chaldiran. The painting is the only work known to us

today, which painted by a European artist and describes the battle of Chaldiran. There is no information about how the painting came to Palermo, the south of Italy. There is no information about it even in the archives of the Palazzo Mirto Museum. An article about the painting by Italian Mirella Galletti, which was published in 2005, rouses interest. But, M. Galletti investigates the painting more in terms of historical events. The author compares the descriptions in the painting with some historical sources. There are also small notes by a restorer Mauro Sebastianelli, who restored the painting in 2007. Except one or two articles and information, there is no detailed information about this painting.



**Pic. 1. «The Battle of Chaldiran». Canvas, oil. 359 cm x 198 cm.
16th-17th centuries. Palazzo Mirto. Palermo. Italy.**

The painting “Battle of the Chaldiran” also attracts attention with its sizes. This work, which was painted with oil color on canvas, is horizontal, its length is 359 cm and width is 198 cm. The sky is described at the top of the painting and the mountains are described in cool colors in the distant background. You can see a big river flowing on the right. Tents have been set up on the right

bank of the river. Ismail I's army is depicted on the right and in the foreground and Sultan Selim I's army is depicted on the left and center. We see Sultan Selim I surrounded by Ottoman warriors lined up in a rectangular structure in the central part. Firearms, or rather cannons were lined up in the first rows of the army. But, Ismail I was described walking in front of his warriors on the enemy and as brown and with long beard wearing armor, a helmet, on a horse. We see a sceptre in Ismail's right hand and a shield in his left hand. Probably, this figure is considered to be Ismail I Safavid according to the sceptre depicted in his hand (Pic. 2.). Sultan Selim I, whom we see in the painting, also has a sceptre in his right hand.

Currently, the capital of Chaldiran province, which is located in the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the region of West Azerbaijan, is Siyah cheshme. The geographical relief and nature landscape described in the painting "Battle of Chaldiran" attract attention for their resemblance to the area. Therefore, we consider that the author of the painting "Battle of Chaldiran" was aware of the geographical structure of the area where the battle took place.



Pic. 2. «The Battle of Chaldiran». The part that is supposed to describe Shah Ismail. Detail. Canvas, oil. 359 cm x 198 cm. 16th-17th centuries. Palazzo Mirto. Palermo. Italy.

The work “Battle of Chaldiran” was restored in 2006-2007, the composition of the canvas and the paint layer on it was studied. It was analyzed by optical and infrared microscopy methods during restoration. In addition, various research methods were used. According to restorer Mauro Sebastianelli, the canvas was fixed to the frame and it is supposed that the frame is not original. The weaving of the canvas is similar to the weaving of the 16th century Venetian canvas [8]. There is some information about the battle of Chaldiran and the order of the Ottoman army horizontally, parallel to the frame at the bottom of the painting “Battle of Chaldiran”. The information is in Italian, but it is supposed that certain letters in the inscriptions were replaced by the letter “X” during the restoration many years ago.

Galletti’s article states that the painting is 350 cm x 230 cm. Galletti emphasizes in his article that the work was painted in the style of Mannerism after the 1580s, most likely in the first half of the 17th century [3].

It should be noted that Mannerism was a style that existed from the 20s of the 16th century to the middle of the 17th century. Pantormo and Bronzino, who were teachers of Cristofano dell’Altissimon, are considered prominent representatives of Mannerism.

M. Galletti suggested that the painting “Battle of the Chaldiran” was connected with the religious mission of Theatine in Georgia in the 17th century: “There was a talented artist in Theatine’s mission in Georgia. Cristoforo Castelli, who was in Georgia in the first half of the 17th century, created certain paintings “for the Shah of Iran” in 1642 at the request of the Iranian rulers in power in Georgia. Some of the paintings could reach Palermo, which is associated with the Georgian Theatine mission. In addition, most of the Theatines were Sicilians” [4].

Theatine Cristoforo Castelli carried out a religious mission in Georgia for a long time. Cristoforo Castelli’s work and activity in Georgia are very interesting. Castelli’s paintings have been investigated by Georgian researchers and numerous studies have been published on this theme. It is no coincidence that there are numerous paintings and notes describing the Georgian people, nature, lifestyle and clothing in Castelli’s albums.

Castelli’s paintings can also be an important source in the study of Safavid and Qizilbash clothes. C.Castelli lived and died in Palermo after returning from Georgia to Italy. It should be noted that Castelli returned to Italy from Georgia in the 1650s and some of the albums were lost during his visit to Palermo. Castelli’s seven albums, which consist of thousands of pages rich in

paintings and manuscripts, are preserved in the Palermo Public Library now. Albums consist of not only drawings and sketches, but also various texts, reports and notes [1]. In my opinion, it is possible that the artist (or customer), who described the Battle of the Chaldiran, was inspired and informed by Castelli's albums.

For unknown reasons, the painting, which is preserved in Palermo for some reason, reminds me of the painting "The Battle of Alexander the Great and Darius" by German artist Albrecht Altdorfer (1480–1538). The painting, which was made in 1528-1529, is a sample of a wonderful painting in the military genre. The work, which was painted by the order of the Bavarian Duke Wilhelm IV, describes the battle between Alexander the Great and Darius III. As in the work "Battle of Chaldiran", this painting describes a multi-figure composition, mixed geographical relief and space. If we pay attention, we see that the audience looks at the battle from the side of Alexander's army in Altdorfer's work. In other words, not the enemy army, but the supporters were placed in the foreground of the work. On the contrary, the Persian king Darius runs away from the audience in the opposite direction. The order of the armies relative to the audience is approximately the same in both paintings.

As if the audience is a member of Ismail's army in the painting describing the battle of Chaldiran. Most likely, the artist emphasized that Europeans support Sophy.

There are certain similarities in the working technique and the composition solution of both paintings. From this point of view, probably, the Palermo sample was inspired or influenced by Altdorfer's work.

Conclusion. So, I believe that the painting "Battle of Chaldiran" preserved in Palermo is of great importance for Azerbaijani study of art. The painting can be an important source for studying the historical event. With the purpose of learning more about the battle and the painting in Palermo, Theatine's mission and especially Cristoforo Castelli's works, paintings and notes should be involved into research work. It should be emphasized once again that the painting describes the battle of Chaldiran and is a unique sample of painting created by a European artist.

This work was supported by the Science Development Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Grant № EIF/MQM/Elm-Təhsil-1-2016-1(26)-71/02/5

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Elşad Əliyev (Azərbaycan)***Rəna Abdullayeva (Azərbaycan)*****“ÇALDIRAN DÖYÜŞÜ” - AVROPA TƏSVİRİ SƏNƏTİNİN NADİR NÜMUNƏSİ**

1524-cü ilin avqust ayında Osmanlılarla Səfəvilər arasında məşhur Çaldıran döyüşü baş verir. Döyüş hər iki tərəfdən böyük itkilərlə bitir və Osmanlı İmperiyasının qələbəsi ilə nəticələnir. Çaldıran döyüşü Səfəvi və Osmanlı miniatürlərində öz əksini tapmaqla yanaşı Avropa yazılı mənbələrində də təsvir edilmişdir. Lakin döyüşün təsvir edildiyi “Çaldıran savaşı” rəsm əsəri Avropa təsviri sənətində nadir nümunə olub, hazırda İtaliyada, Palermo şəhərində saxlanılır. Rəngkarlıq əsərinin müəllifi və yaranma tarixi məlum deyil. Təqdim etdiyimiz məqalədə “Çaldıran savaşı” əsərini təhlil etməyə çalışacağıq.

Açar sözlər: Şah İsmayıl, Çaldıran döyüşü, Kristoforo Kastelli, Palazzo Mirto, Osmanlı-Səfəvi müharibələri.

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**«БИТВА ПРИ ЧАЛДЫРАНЕ» - УНИКАЛЬНЫЙ ОБРАЗЕЦ
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО ИЗОБРАЗИТЕЛЬНОГО ИСКУССТВА**

Знаменитая битва при Чалдыране произошла между османами и Сефевидами в августе 1524 года. Битва закончилась тяжелыми потерями с обеих сторон и привела к победе Османской империи. Битва при Чалдыране отражена в миниатюрах Сефевидов и Османской империи, а также в европейских письменных источниках. Но картина «Битва при Чалдыране», описывающая битву, является уникальным образцом европейского изобразительного искусства и сейчас хранится в Италии, в городе Палермо. Автор и дата создания картины неизвестны. В этой статье мы постараемся исследовать произведение «Битва при Чалдыране».

Ключевые слова: Шах Исмаил, битва при Чалдыране, Кристофоро Кастелли, Палаццо Мирто, Османско-Сефевидские сражения.