

## ІСТОРИОГРАФІЯ, ДЖЕРЕЛОЗНАВСТВО ТА СПЕЦІАЛЬНІ ІСТОРИЧНІ ДИСЦИПЛІНИ

UDC 94

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-5984.2024/1.24>

*Alyeva S.*

Baku State University

### STATE STRUCTURE OF THE AZERBAIJAN EMPIRE OF NADIR SHAH IN TURKISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

*The aim of this article is to examine the state structure of the Azerbaijani empire of Nadir Shah Afshar based on the works of Turkish historians. From the study of Turkish historiography, it is clear that the Afshar Empire was headed by a padishah with unlimited power. Nadir Shah carried out a number of reforms to create a centralized state. After Nadir Shah Afshar came to power, he created a centralized administrative apparatus and eliminated a number of state institutions that existed during the Safavid era. The feudal class was the social support of the Shah's rule. Nadir Shah abolished the positions of chief vizier and sadr-azam (chairman of elders) that had existed before him during the Safavid period. Traditionally, he appointed people loyal to him to high positions. Abolishing the previous beylerbeylik system that existed during the Safavid era, the beylerbeyliks of Karabakh, Shirvan, Chukhur-Saad and Tabriz, he created a single administrative division called Azerbaijan. Tabriz was the center of united Azerbaijan. His state was divided into 3 khanates with centers in Mashhad, Tabriz and Shiraz. Khorasan was ruled by his son Rzagulu, and Azerbaijan by his brother Ibrahim Khan. Judges and other officials were subordinate to the Beylarbeys; they were appointed directly by the padischa himself. All this is explored in the article on the basis of the works of Turkish historians and the essence of the state structure of the empire of Nadir Shah is revealed.*

*Methodology and methods.* The study used several research and information methods of historical science, such as induction, historicity, comparative analysis and analogy. Scientific works, especially Turkish ones, were used for this purpose.

*The novelty of the article* lies in the fact that for the first time in Russian literature the specifics of the state structure of the empire of the Azerbaijani Nadir Shah Afshar are considered.

*Main results:* Thus, from the study of Turkish historiography of the state structure of Nadir Shah's empire, it becomes clear that the Afshar Empire was led by a Shah with unlimited powers. Nadir Shah carried out a number of reforms to create a centralized state. After Nadir Shah Afshar came to power, he created a centralized administrative apparatus and eliminated a number of state institutions that existed during the Safavid period. The feudal class was the social support of the Shah's rule.

*Key words:* Azerbaijan, Nadir Shah Afshar, Turkish historiography, state structure.

**Problem statement.** Azerbaijan, which has an ancient and rich history of statehood, is still in the center of attention on the world historical stage with many outstanding statesmen. One of such prominent statesmen is Nadir Shah Afshar, the founder of the Afshar state, a historical figure. The personality of Nadir Shah Afshar was the focus of attention of many countries of the world during his lifetime, numerous studies were conducted about him, and various opinions and considerations were put forward. Many factors determining this attract attention. First of all, Nadir Shah achieved great success as a military commander in a short period of time and recovered almost half of the lost territories of the Safavid

Empire. Second, he stopped the military machine of the Ottoman state that annexed the Middle East to its empire, forced the rapidly growing Russian state to reckon with it, conquered India, Afghanistan and Turkestan, and created its own new empire. From this point of view, the personality of Nadir Shah, his relations with the neighboring states, as well as the newly founded Afshar empire are in the focus of the historians of many countries, including Turkey.

**Turkish historians about Nadir shah Afshar and his state structure.** One of the attention-grabbing works related to the social and political history of the Nadir Shah Afshar empire, including the state structure, in Turkish historiography is the

translated work “Nadir Shahi-I Avshar” published by Selenge Publications in 2015. This work written by M.R. Arunova and K.Z. Eshrefyan consists of six sections and 257 pages. The first section of the work is the classification of sources, the second section is a brief overview of the history of the Safavid state, the third section is the socio-economic policy of Nadir Shah, the fourth section is the structure of Nadir Shah’s state, the fifth section is the rebellions against Nadir Shah Afshar, and the sixth section is the economic crisis and the fall of Nadir Shah Afshar’s state. Covers. As can be seen from the structure of the work, the state structure of Nadir Shah Afshar empire is covered in the fourth section. It is written in the fourth section of the work: “The state of Nadir Shah was a typical military-feudal state. The Shah’s reign was endless. Although the council of emirs, vizier-ezam, head of guards, head of slaves, head of doorman, head of gunners, head of divanbey, which existed during the time of the Safavid kings, did not have such influence. As soon as Nadir Shah came to the throne, he actually abolished it [5, p. 89]”. The author then describes Nadir Shah Afshar as a despot and writes: “As soon as Nadir ascended the throne, he declared to the Iranians that he wanted to rule the kingdom without partners, and although he established a state council and divided it according to the number of provinces, he ordered them not to make any important decisions without his opinion. Numerous punishments and cruelties testify to Nadir’s lack of mercy [5, p. 90]”. M.S. Ivanov, distinguished in the former Soviet historiography for his research on current issues of Azerbaijan’s history, writes in this regard: “Nadir Shah tried to centralize the country’s administration at the same time. His state was divided into 3 principalities centered in Mashhad, Tabriz and Shiraz. Khorasan was ruled by his son Rzagulu, and Azerbaijan by his brother Ibrahim Khan. Judges and other officials were subordinate to Baylarbeys, they were appointed directly by the king [11, p. 134].” In this regard, Muhammad Kazim writes that the management was centralized so that all economic and political issues were determined by the king, and the revenues received by the king were controlled by the king. The state was divided into four provinces. These were Azerbaijan (all regions of the South Caucasus ruled by the Afshars, except Azerbaijan lands, especially Georgia), Ajam Iraq, Khorasan and Persian regions. Nadir Shah appointed “mustofimemalik” to each province, who controlled the financial situation of their region. After the conquest of India, a new province was established under the leadership of “mustofi-memalik”, who oversees all

income and expenses of India” [10, p. 509]. As can be seen from the data, Nadir Shah Afshar created a centralized administrative apparatus after coming to power and eliminated a number of state institutions that existed during the Safavid era. The shah had unlimited power in the country, the feudal class was the social support of the shah’s power. It should be noted that with Nadir Shah Afshar’s coming to power, Muhammad Kazim also writes that many structures in the state administration apparatus that existed during the Safavid period were abolished: head etc. canceled his duties. However, in the decrees issued on Georgia in 1742 and 1744, it seemed that the positions such as “master of the threshold” and “master of riflemen” still remained [10, p. 509; 1, p. 66; 2, p. 166]. Commenting on the basis of the economic base of the state, M.R. Arunova and K.Z. Eshrefyan write that, as in all feudal societies, the economic basis of Nadir’s state also rested on the small-scale workshops produced by small artisans at their own expense. The army, which was created due to a huge administrative mechanism, the expansion of state territories and continuous wars, was maintained at the expense of the weakened population, especially the peasants [5, p. 89]. The authors further write: “Peasant production began to collapse from the end of the 17th century. Feudal feuds and continuous wars that started even before the fall of the Safavid state, the seven-year rule of Afghan and Turkish invaders, and their struggles over Iran and Azerbaijan accelerated this economic collapse. The robbery suffered by the conquered population by Afghans and Turks deepened it somewhat [5, p. 90]”. However, the authors refer to the works of a number of European and Russian researchers and characterize the first years of Nadir Shah Afshar’s rule as a symbol of an ideal ruler: “He tried to slowly win the love of the people, who were leaning towards him due to his growing fame due to his victories. First of all, he did not want a welcome ceremony to be organized for him in any place he went to, and he did not want the people to incur any expenses for these ceremonies. Nadir rolled up his sleeves to eliminate all irregularities, to stop the dissensions between tribes and classes, to settle the disputes of provincial leaders, high officials, Qazis and other members of this class. Despite their position and past services, he severely punished the culprits. Every day, he went to the city and held hearings about those who harmed the merchants and the population, sometimes one, sometimes several. He was interested in many issues, including solving the problems of families who were dissatisfied with city life and had a hard time [5, p. 90]”. According to the author, such

demagogic actions were aimed at further exploiting the population of Nadir Shah Afshar and breaking his resistance. His policy in this direction was showing itself even before he ascended the throne in 1736. While the poor villagers supported Nadir Gulu Khan in their struggle against the Afghan invaders, they hoped to reduce the tax burden on the shoulders of the hated foreigners and improve their living conditions [5, p. 90]. As it is clear from the data, while on the one hand, the authors portray Nadir Shah Afshar as a strong head of state, on the other hand, they don't even shy away from expressions that vilify him.

The conducted research shows that in Nadir Shah Afshar's empire, there were numerous civil bureaucracy layers of the central and local government apparatus in addition to the military officials. Unlike the military elite, the civilian bureaucracy was indigenous and ethnically diverse. Mirza Mehdi Khan Astrabadi, a descendant of the Safavids, was a representative of this class. He was one of the courtiers who were very close to Nadir Shah, he performed various tasks for him, and for a long time he was his personal scribe.

Within the civil bureaucracy, the positions of "mustoufi al-mamalik", "lashkarnavis", and "minister-i-wirahat" were important. Many representatives of the civil bureaucracy supported the Shah's policy of undermining the power of the military feudal lords of some tribes. Nadir Shah tried to create new civil bureaucracy cadres instead of the old officials. For example, Taghi Khan, who used to be an ordinary tax collector in Persia, was appointed a judge in 1736 [11, p. 102; 12, p. 44].

In order to strengthen his power, Nadir reformed the state administration apparatus. While still in Mughan, Nadir Shah abolished a number of positions, including the post of prime minister. The management of all financial bodies of the state was subordinated to the king [11, p. 102].

In Nadir Shah's state, provincial treasurers were appointed directly by the king, and all financial affairs of the state were under the supervision of inspectors. Later, the collection of taxes in all provinces and regions fell on the governors and chief governors. Cities were the center of financial administration of each region. Like the Safavid kings, Nadir appointed officials from within to collect taxes. For example, mirza-vakil, mir-sufi, etc. [11, p. 102].

It should also be noted from the anonymous work "Tazkiratul-Muluk" written in 1723, which reflects a general view of the Safavid state mechanism and management system, that the first person in the state after the shah was the grand vizier. Appointments

to important positions in the state apparatus, the palace and provinces, and determining their salaries were determined by the "grand minister" and only then sent for the signature of the shah. However, the appointment and dismissal of minor officials was carried out by the "grand minister". All financial transactions related to state taxes, money sent to the treasury from the capital Isfahan were carried out with the signature of the "great minister" [12, p. 106; 9, p. 58].

There was a special notebook on the divan of the Grand Vizier, called a guard. Most likely, this notebook was used to reflect the necessary wishes and demands of the people and to reach the grand vizier. The financial department consisted of two departments. These were divided into treasury revenue department (Serkari-divan) and throne revenue department (Serkari-hasse). The management of these two financial departments was related to two types of territorial ownership, namely, the territories of the state and the shah. "Mustafi al-Mamalik", who was among the great emirs and had many civilians and soldiers, was at the head of the treasury revenue department. The income and output of the Shah's territories was regulated by a kind of "serkari-hasse". No matter how independent the revenues of the treasury and the throne were, the last word was still said by the "grand vizier". To allocate to labor, etc. All decrees came into force with the seal of "Mustafi al-Mamalik", except for cases related to insignificant issues [11, p. 107; 3, p. 54].

It is known from the work "Nadir Shah-i Avshar" that some time after the accession of Nadir Shah Afshar to the throne, most of the government officials who held high positions in the Safavid administration were removed from their positions. Here we read: "Tahmasib Gulu (Nadir Shah) ordered the killing of Safavid gentlemen one after the other under various pretexts, or removed them, if any of the Safavids remained in charge in any region of the country, he never trusted them and did not keep them in their positions [5, p. 108]."

Talking about the state structure of Nadir Shah's Afshar, A. Atesh writes that after making Mashhad the capital of the empire instead of Isfahan, Shah abolished the education of scribes in the harem, which had been going on since the time of Abbas I. He gave his sons positions in the army and administration at a young age. This activity of Nadir Afshar was a step taken on the way to healthy the foundations of the dynasty he founded [2, p. 230]. According to the author, apart from this activity, there were no exceptionally significant state events. That is why

it can be said that the Safavid state organization continued in the same way during the reign of Nadir Shah [2, p. 230].

One of the studies in Turkish historiography that talks about the social and political life of Nadir Shah's empire is Sayed Sadat, the author of the master's thesis "Afghanistan during the period of Nadir Shah". In the fourth chapter of the author's scientific work defended at Sakarya University in 2017, it is possible to learn some ideas about the politics and state management system implemented by the empire in the remote areas. The author writes that the ulema class was assigned to villages as inspectors. Thanks to Afsharli state, these ulema lead a good life, they considered themselves to be shareholders in the economic interests of Afsharli state. The palace of the Afsharli state (in Afghanistan) was not as luxurious and crowded as the palace of the Babur state. Along with soldiers, there were servants, artists, and poets in the country. Nadir Shah's appreciation of artists and poets created conditions for the development of culture and art in central and southern Afghanistan [12, p. 79]. However, the governance of Afghanistan did not change much during Nadir Shah's reign. Because Nadir Shah Afshar, who was involved in military affairs, could not find an opportunity to create state institutions. The administration of the Afghan lands with divans left from the Babur state continued until 1847. These were institutions such as "Divani-Vezarat", "Divani-Vekalat", "Divani-Mustafi", "Divani-Hajci", "Sarai divan", etc. "Divani-Vezarat" works as a chieftaincy, and after the king, the vizier was one of the most powerful people in the Afsharli state. Financial administrations were managed by Sadarat divan. Intelligence and security issues were handled by the king. The spies chosen by Nadir Shah worked in the country as a whole [12, p. 79–80].

**Conclusions.** Thus, from the examination of Turkish historiography on the state structure of Nadir Shah's empire, it is clear that the Afshar empire was headed by a shah with unlimited powers. Nadir Shah implemented a series of reforms to create a centralized state. After Nadir Shah Afshar came to power, he created a centralized administrative apparatus and eliminated a number of state institutions that existed during the Safavid period. The feudal class was the social support of the Shah's rule. Nadir Shah abolished the position of chief vizier and chairman-ezam, which existed before him during the Safavid

period. Traditionally, he appointed people loyal to him to high positions. By canceling the previous beylarbeylik system existing during the Safavid era, the beylarbeylik of Karabakh, Shirvan, Chukhur-Saad and Tabriz, he created a single administrative division under the name of Azerbaijan. The center of unified Azerbaijan was Tabriz. His state was divided into 3 principalities centered in Mashhad, Tabriz and Shiraz. Khorasan was ruled by his son Rzagulu, and Azerbaijan by his brother Ibrahim Khan. Judges and other officials were subordinate to Baylarbeys, they were appointed directly by the king.

From the researching of Turkish historiography, it is also known that during the Safavid era, the previous powers of the Shiite clerical class, which constituted the highest official class, were reduced. The Mughan congress created a deep gap between the religious section and the representatives of the government. In fact, with this step, Nadir Shah Afshar tried to eliminate the religious divisions that existed before him, tried to reduce the role of his clerical group in the affairs of state administration, and created a normal basis for a healthy environment in social and political life. After the Mughan Congress, in order to further weaken the role of the Shia clerics, who have an important voice in the state administration, the waqf goods were also confiscated, and their wealth was confiscated for the benefit of the state treasury. As a result, the state's revenues increased significantly.

In the empire of Nadir Shah Afshar, one of the main pillars of the shah's kingdom, which had unlimited power, was the army that protected the empire and power. Although Nadir's army consisted of volunteers belonging to different tribes, the supreme command was made up of soldiers-feudal lords of Afshar, Kurds, and some Bayat tribes, which were located among the Qizilbash tribes since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Nadir decided to get rid of the people in important positions in the state, especially Fatali Khan, who served in the palace during the time of the Safavid Shahs and who was the minister of Sultan Hussein. The financial affairs of the state were completely under the command of the Shah, the Ministry of Finance was removed from the center and divided into four large provinces. These were the provinces of Azerbaijan (Georgia, other areas of the Caucasus), Ajam Iraq, Khorasan and Fars. «Mustavfi al-Mamalik», who was the head of these departments, was responsible for the financial affairs of the country.

#### Bibliography:

1. Adıgüzel, A., Yıldırım A. I. I. Mahmud dönemi (1730–1754) Osmanlı-İran ilişkileri Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Fakültesi dergisi, sayı VII, c. 4, 2017, s. 59–96.

2. Atesh, A. Nadir Şah döneminde Osmanlı-İran siyasi ilişkileri (1720–1747). İstanbul: Cizgi Kitab evi, 2022, 264 s.
3. Atesh, A. Nadir şah Afşarın ölümünden sonra İranda hakimiyet mücadeleleri ve Osmanlı devletinin İran politikası // Afyonkarahisar Kocatepe Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 2006, cilt 8, sayı 2, s. 53–64.
4. Ateş, A. Avşarlı Nadir Şah ve döneminde Osmanlı-İran mücadeleleri. Basılmamış Doktora Tezi, İsparta, 2001, 156 s.
5. Arunova, M.R., Esrefyan K.Z. Nadir şahı-ı Avşar. İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2015, 275 s.
6. Aktepe, M. Vakanüvüs Raşid Mehmed Efendinin Eşref Han nezdindeki Elçiliği ve buna takaddüm eden siyasi muhabereleler // Tarih Mecmuaları XII, İstanbul, 1954, s. 162–163.
7. Aktepe, M. Patrona isyanı (1730). İstanbul: Altınordu Yayınları, 2016, 160 s.
8. Aktepe, M. I. Mahmud // İslam Ansiklopediyası, c. VII. MEB, İstanbul, 1993, s. 158–165.
9. Aktepe, M. Dürri Ehmed Efendinin İran Sefareti // Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Degisi, İstanbul, sayı 1, 1968, s. 56–84.
10. Mammadova, R. Nadir şah dönemi devlet yönetimi, askeri ve ekonomik yapı // Nadir Şahın Mirası. İstanbul, 2023, s. 509–522.
11. Mahmudov Y., Mustafazade T. Nadir şah Əfşar. Bakı: NPB, 2019, 248 s.
12. Sadat S.S. Nadir Şah Döneminde Afganistan. Yüksek lisans tezi. Sakarya, 2017, 118 s.

### **Алієва С. ДЕРЖАВНИЙ ПРИСТРІЙ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОЇ ІМПЕРІЇ НАДІР-ШАХУ В ТУРЕЦЬКІЙ ІСТОРІОГРАФІЇ**

*Метою цієї статті є розгляд державного устрою азербайджанської імперії Надір-шаха Афшара на основі робіт турецьких істориків. З вивчення турецької історіографії видно, що Афшарську імперію очолював падиша з необмеженою владою. Надір-шах провів низку реформ щодо створення централізованої держави. Після приходу до влади Надір-шаха Афшара він створив централізований адміністративний апарат та ліквідував низку державних інститутів, що існували в епоху Сефевідів. Клас феодалів був соціальною опорою шахського правління. Надір-шах скасував посаду головного візира і садр-азама (голови старійшин), що існувала до нього в період Сефевідів. Зазвичай на високі посади він призначав вірних йому людей. Скасувавши колишню систему бейлербейліків, що існувала в епоху Сефевідів, бейларбейліків Карабаха, Ширвана, Чухур-Саада та Тебріз, він створив єдиний адміністративний поділ під назвою Азербайджан. Центром єдиного Азербайджану був Тебріз. Його держава була поділена на 3 ханства з центрами у Мешхеді, Тебрізі та Ширазі. Хорасаном правив його син Рзагулу, а Азербайджаном – його брат Ібрагім-хан. Судді та інші чиновники підкорялися Бейларбеям, їх призначав безпосередньо сам падишах. Все це досліджується у статті на основі праць турецьких істориків та розкривається сутність державного устрою імперії Надір-шаха.*

*Методологія та методи.* У дослідженні використано кілька дослідницьких та інформаційних методів історичної науки, таких як індукція, історичність, порівняльний аналіз та аналогія. З цією метою використовувалися наукові праці, особливо турецькі.

*Новизна статті* полягає в тому, що вперше у вітчизняній літературі розглядається специфіка державного устрою імперії азербайджанського Надір-шаха Афшара.

*Основні результати.* Таким чином, вивчення турецької історіографії державного устрою імперії Надір-шаха стає зрозумілим, що Афшарську імперію очолював шах з необмеженими повноваженнями. Надір-шах провів низку реформ щодо створення централізованої держави. Після приходу до влади Надір-шаха Афшара він створив централізований адміністративний апарат і ліквідував низку державних інституцій, що існували під час Сефевідів. Клас феодалів був соціальною опорою шахського правління.

*Ключові слова:* Азербайджан, Надір Шах Афшар, турецька історіографія, державний устрій.