



A Comparative Study of Safavid and Ottoman Narratives in the Event of the Recapture of Tabriz (1012 A.H. / 1603 A.D.)

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Abstract

In Ramadan 993 AH./September 1585 with the extensive campaign of Özdemirzadeh Osman Pasha, the prime minister and commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army, Tabriz was conquered and joined the Ottoman territory. After the capture of Tabriz, the Ottomans were able to advance to Garmroud of Sarab and completely capture the Ojan area (today's Bostan-Abad). Immediately after conquering Tabriz, they built a fort in Ojan in order to continue their presence in the captured areas and to counter Safavid counter-attacks. After the occupation of Tabriz by the Ottomans, during the reign of Sultan Murad III, the Safavids did not stop thinking of recapturing it. Hamza Mirza, the crown prince, fought for the liberation of Tabriz for about a year with the fortress dwellers of that city and finally died because of insisting on this decision. Shah Abbas I After reaching the throne, like his brother, insisted on this issue. Naturally, the event of recapturing the lost cities is considered a conquest and victory for the Safavids, and a defeat and humiliation for the Ottomans. Therefore, it can be expected that the Safavid historians will proudly mention it in their works, and the Ottoman historians, if they are forced to narrate it, will include it briefly and with a kind of stubbornness and justification. In other words, Safavid historians narrate this event with a positive point of view and admiration, and Ottoman historians with anger and desperation.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the way of reporting and the type of reaction of Safavid and Ottoman historians to the issue of the recapture of Tabriz from Ottomans with military operations. For this purpose, some sources close to the event were selected from the Safavid works and a number of Ottoman chronicles, and their narratives were studied in the method of confronting and comparing. The Safavid works include: Tarikh-e Alam Arai Abbasi, Rouznameh-e Mullajalal, Khold Barin, Tarikh-e Jahan Arai Abbasi,



and *Rawdat al-Safawiyyah*. The Ottoman sources are: *Fazlaka-e Tarikh-e Katib Chalabi*, *Sahaif al-Akhbar fi Waqai al-Aasar of Monajjem Bashi Ahmad Dede*, *Konhe al-Akhbar*, *Tarikh Pechavi* and *Tarikh Naima*.

Shah Abbas I on the 7th day of Rabi al-Thani 1012 AH. left Isfahan for Tabriz and after 11 days of march, reached that city on the morning of the twelfth day, while he was hiding his route. While the Safavid sources mention the Shah's campaign to Azerbaijan with admiration, the historian Naima considers it a movement contrary to the dignity and principles of "royalty" and in accordance with the behavior of bandits. *Tarikh-e Alam Arai Abbasi* mentions that only "a group of lieutenants of Iqbal's procession" went with Shah Abbas from Isfahan, and Naima's history considers it to be two to three thousand Mamluks who were the elite of the Shah's soldiers. After reaching Tabriz, a group of bandits, beggars and adventurers were added to this number. Also, according to the contents of the mentioned Ottoman sources, *Zulfiqar Khan Qaramani*, the ruler of Ardabil, joined the Shah in Tabriz with fifteen thousand soldiers, while according to the contents of *Rawda al-Safawieh*, *Zulfiqar Khan* joined the Shah's army in Alang of Ujan with only three thousand riders. Therefore, the exaggeration of the Ottoman resources and the enlargement of the enemy's forces, which caused their defeat, is a point of attention here. This enlargement of the enemy's forces should actually be considered as a kind of justification for their defeat in hand of Qizilbashids.

The only Safavid source that depicts the condition of the city of Tabriz after nearly twenty years of Ottoman rule, is *Tarikh-e Alam Arai Abbasi*. *Skanderbeg* in his history calls it a ruin. The destruction of Tabriz by the Ottomans is a fact that even Ottoman historians have admitted in their works while describing how Tabriz was captured. The situation in the city was so chaotic that Shah Abbas did not even find a suitable house to settle down in that city, so he went to *Shanb-e Ghazan* and landed in the house of *Molana Woghooi-e Tabrizi*. There he reviewed his army. At the arrival of Shah Abbas in the vicinity of Tabriz, the people, without knowing about the presence of the Safavid Shah, as soon as they saw the Qizilbash army, took out the Heydari helmets, which they had hidden them in the basements and hideouts for fear of the Ottomans and put on their heads. Every one of the Ottomans who was in that city, captured and killed. With the conquest of Tabriz, a group of Ottomans who had married with the girls of Tabriz within twenty years and had children from them, without considering causal relationship, were separated from their children and wives and killed by the father, brother, and relatives of that girl. The description of these events is found in Safavid sources and Ottoman chronicles. For example, some strange aspects of those behaviors can be seen in the book "*Tabrizia*" by *Talighizadeh* or "*Konh al-Akhbar*" by *Mustafa Aali*. After the occupation of Tabriz, a war broke out between the Ottoman and Safavid forces in the *Sufiyan* area. Although the Ottomans showed bravery at first, but with the measures of the Shah and his generals, the ranks of the Ottoman army were defeated. Ottoman historians have mentioned the number



of Ottoman soldiers in this war as 1,500 and the Safavid forces much more. The author of *Fazlekeh* also counts the Ottoman army as ten times less than the Safavid army, but *Iskanderbeg Turkman* and the author of *Khold Barin* give the number of Aali Pasha's army as five thousand people and says that there were no more than five to six thousand people in the Shah's army. *Jonabadi* considers the number of Ottoman soldiers to be twelve thousand cavalry. After defeating the Ottoman army, Shah Abbas turned to the Tabriz fortress, which was in the hands of the Ottomans. This fort, which was able to withstand the attacks of Hamza Mirza for eleven months at the beginning of the occupation of Tabriz, did not resist much this time. The defenders of the castle surrendered after a short resistance due to lack of supplies and ammunition and despair of the arrival of reinforcements. From the comparison of the contents of the works of both sides, it is clear that the views of both sides are the same; Both sources have spoken about the surrender of the castle dwellers, especially that the Shah promised to forgive and caress those who surrendered. Of course, Ottoman historians such as *Haji Khalifa* and *Mustafa Chalabi* claim that the Safavid Shah did not fulfill his pledge of protection, so that the Ottoman judge of Tabriz, *Sheikh Effendi*, who had received protection from the Shah and was leaving for Van with a group of Ottomans, killed. Safavid sources not only do not mention the aggression mentioned in Ottoman sources, but also write that some Romans who wanted to stay in Tabriz, Shah Abbas agreed to their stay.

Keywords: Tabriz, the Safavids, the Ottomans, Historiography, Recapturing.

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