

**A Russian Officer in the Persian Cossack Brigade:  
Vladimir Andreevich Kosagovskii**

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## Abstract

The Persian Cossack Brigade was founded in 1879 after the personal request by Nasr al-Din Shah of Persia to the Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich of Russia. The creation of the Brigade was a part of the process of europeization of the Persian army that took place in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Brigade was under the rule of Russian officers, and in time came to be associated with the Russian imperial expansion in Iran.

The activity of the Brigade, however, was not always successful and effective, and the problems it suffered at times raise doubts about whether the use of the Brigade as an actor of Russian influence was at all possible.

One of the most successful Russian officers at the head of the Brigade, Vladimir Andreevich Kosagovskii, was appointed to this position in 1894. Due to his activity the Brigade was put out of the crisis. At the time of his instruction the Brigade effectively came into the sphere of Russian foreign politics in Iran. Its troops started to participate actively in the internal life of the country, such as in the case when they took control over the whole Tehran to ensure safe succession of Mozaffar al-Din to the throne after the assassination of his predecessor, Nasr al-Din. The Brigade was given financial support from the customs of Northern Persia, the revenues from which were given to Russia as a guarantee for Persian loan. Russian ambassador personally intervened to the Shah in 1894 to prevent the possible disbandment of the Brigade. However, after the end of Kosagovskii's contract, the Brigade once again entered the face of decline with little support from Russia, and once again came to the political arena only in 1908 to fight against the Persian Constitutionalists.

The thesis will make use of the vast sources left by one of the most successful officers in the head of the Brigade, colonel Kosagovskij, to give answer to several questions. What was the colonel's view on the mission he was assigned in Iran? What were his ideas about the general trend of Russian politics in this region? What were the reasons for fluctuating of the Russian government's attitude towards the brigade, and was there any general plan of actions in connection with the unit and Russian politics in Iran in general? These problems will be dealt with in the following chapters.

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## Introduction

Expansion is an inseparable part of the existence of an empire. One of the primary goals of an imperial state always is to export its influence over the borders, across the deserts and the seas, with the ultimate goal to reach a maximal possible control over the targeted territories. The ways to do that were manifold, as were the spheres to which that influence was applied.

Economics of the targeted state could be infiltrated by foreign companies that would be granted taxation and territorial privileges and thus dominate over the domestic production. The political sphere could be influenced by checks and barriers imposed onto foreign or internal politics of the influenced state, achieved, for instance, as a consequence of loans from another state. Finally, among many other things, the military might have been the target. One way of doing this was a direct implementation of imperial military forces, growing in scale up to a war. Another way could be influencing the military of a targeted state itself, by having access to it through military advisors and/or military training missions.

In the case of the late 19th century Russian Empire, Iran<sup>1</sup> was a zone of influence implemented through all the mentioned ways: through the economics, through the political sphere and through the military. The Persian Cossack Brigade that the thesis will be focused on, was founded, trained and directed by the Russian officers. Established with the goal to train an elite detachment for the Persian Nasr al-Din Shah, in the long run it several times served a tool for implementing Russian imperial politics in Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> In the official Western documents the country was called Persia up until Reza Shah in 1935 requested to use the name Iran instead. In Persian, however, the country was called Iran throughout the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century, so I will use the names Iran and Persia interchangeably in the paper.

The history of the Brigade shows many ups and downs, with both achievements and flops in close connection with the officers currently in charge of the Brigade. That makes it important, even for such a vast subject as Russian imperial politics, to look closely at those officers and their actions. The research is a case study of one of the most successful and influential officers in the charge of the Persian Cossack Brigade, Vladimir Andreevich Kosagovskii. The analysis of the sources will reveal the worldview of the colonel and his vision of the role of the Cossack Brigade in the Russian imperial politics. Understanding how Kosagovskii perceived the country he was working in and its customs, will allow for better comprehension of what plans he made for the Russian mission in Persia and whether such a high officer was for the idea of Russian expansion to the East. This, then, will allow me to make conclusions about whether Kosagovskii's ideas fell in line with the actual politics of Russian empire in Iran in the following years – and if they did not, then why.

Russian and Western Iranian studies are represented by a number of works mostly on the political history of the country. The problem of the influence of the Great States on Iran is researched in a general way. The mechanisms of this influence, such as the Russian military mission was, have largely stayed out of the focus of the researchers.

Taking into consideration the importance of the personal factor for the state of affairs in the Brigade, it has been made the goal of the thesis to focus the research on one person, Vladimir Andreevich Kosagovskii. The mentioned officer had been in charge of the Brigade for 9 years (1894-1903), the longest time out of all twelve Russian officers ever in the head of it. Under him the Brigade had overcome the crisis of previous years. The thorough reforms taken by this officer

turned the Brigade into a real force, and his ideas apparently convinced the General Staff to transfer from the position according to which colonel Domontovich was taken off his position out of the fear of creating “a real military power in Persia”<sup>2</sup> to the stand that allowed Russia in the end realize the potential of the Brigade as a lever of influence and make steps to take it under close control.

The specificity of the person of the colonel Kosagovskii adds to the reasons why focusing on him might be a relevant research topic. Apart from being an active military official who devoted himself to the issues connected with the Brigade, the sources that he left show his interest in numerous topics connected with language, everyday life, languages, geography, political system, local trades and crafts, customs and rites, religion. This rightly puts him into the category of a military Oriental scholar. The information that he left in his vast sources, apart from a large factual material, allows one to research the position and views that Kosagovskii upheld towards Iran. All factors combined, Iran being a sphere of Russian imperial influence and Kosagovskii being a Russian officer on duty in Iran, makes his notes, articles and diaries a valuable research source. The specificity of Kosagovskii as an officer with power to implement his ideas, who at the same time is interested in studying the eastern country, makes him an excellent figure to be viewed within the discourse of Orientalism. Analyzing the views Kosagovskii had on Iran and how those views influenced his work as of the instructor of the Persian Cossack Brigade, will add to the debate on Russian Orientalism and help reach a better understanding of Russia’s imperial policy in Iran as an oriental region.

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<sup>2</sup> Kosagovskii V. A. *Ocherk razvitiya Persidskoi Kazachyei Brigady* [A review of the development of the Persian Cossack Brigade], (Moscow, 1921), 393.

The figure of colonel Kosagovskii presents a very promising object of research. To make it clear, I will allow myself here to go off the topic of the Colonel himself and present one of the cases of the debate over the Russian Orientalism. Namely, it was the discussion that happened when Nathaniel Knight published his article *Grigor'ev in Orenburg, 1851-1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?*, Adeeb Khalid responded to that with his *Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism*, and Maria Todorova attempted to draw a line under the debate with the *Does Russian Orientalism have a Russian soul?*<sup>3</sup>

To avoid variant readings, I will here define the basic concepts that I will deal with. In the case of a contested term of Orientalism, I will hold on to the classical definition of Edward Said:

**Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on. . . . Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient--dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient<sup>4</sup>.**

The term "empire" is understood in the paper as defined by Ronald Grigor Suny. Imperialist, thus, is a person who supports or practices imperialism:

**I define empire as a particular form of domination or control, between two units set apart in a hierarchical, inequitable relationship, more precisely a composite state in which a metropole dominates a periphery to the disadvantage of the periphery. ... I extend the definition of imperialism to the deliberate act or policy that furthers a state's extension or maintenance for the purpose of aggrandizement of that kind of direct or indirect political or economic control over any other inhabited territory which involves the**

<sup>3</sup> Todorova M. *Does Russian orientalism have a Russian soul? A contribution to the debate between Nathaniel Knight and Adeeb Khalid* // *Kritika*, Bloomington. 2000. New Series - Vol.1, N.4

<sup>4</sup> Said, Edward. *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 2-3.



**inequitable treatment of those inhabitants in comparison with its own citizens or subjects. ... an imperial state differs from the broader category of multinational states, confederations, or federations in that it “is not organized on the basis of political equality among societies or individuals. The domain of empire is a people subject to unequal rule.”<sup>5</sup>**

As for colonialism, in his book *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* Jürgen Osterhammel says the following:

**Colonialism is a relationship between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and their ordained mandate to rule.<sup>6</sup>**

Robert Young makes the following difference between imperialism and colonialism: whereas imperialism operates from centre and is a recognized state policy, being developed for ideological as well as financial reasons, colonialism is much more aimed only at commercial intentions.<sup>7</sup>

Said argues for the close connection between knowledge and imperial enterprise. Was Orientalism implemented in the case of the Russian Empire? The question is open. Said remains ambivalent towards the Russian empire, saying that the Russian imperialism is somehow different.

Knight brings up in his article the example of Vasilii Vasilievich Grigor'ev, “one of Russia's foremost specialists in the history and languages of Central Asia and the Near East, set off from St. Petersburg to build a new career as an

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald G. Suny. *The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, “National” Identity, and Theories of Empire*. (The University of Chicago, Chapter for *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Soviet Union, 1917-1953*, 1997), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Osterhammel, Jürgen. *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Gilmartin, M., C. Gallaher, C. *Key Concepts in Political Geography*. (New York, Sage Publications Ltd. : Imperialism/Colonialism, 2008), 116.

administrator in...the city of Orenburg”<sup>8</sup>. Motivated to implement his apparent Orientalist knowledge at the disposal of Russian imperial administration, Grigor’ev gained support among the Kazakhs but not among civil servants of Turkestan. Grigoriev never could turn his orientalism into political exercise, out of which Knight makes his point about the peculiarity of Russian Orientalism, more attuned to diversity than to a binary division between East and West, with the dichotomy between East and West in the case of Russia being not clear, rather an uneasy triptych. Knight argues against the implementation of a universalist approach and generalization with his example.

Adeeb Khalid responds to that by saying that the fact that Grigoriev did not get to exercise power does not mean that he did not want to do it. The diversity of Russian Orientalism did not mean the other imperialists did not distinguish between different kinds of Orientals as Russians did? Orientals always stayed on the wrong side of the civilizational divide anyway<sup>9</sup>. Khalid calls for a universalist approach because only it can overcome the self-imposed limitations of Russian historiography.

Maria Todorova in her article draws a line below the previous two by saying that there is no third way. The universal idiom opens the field – but comes with cultural hegemony; distinctiveness approach, at the same time, comes at the price of isolation and narrow-mindedness. So, Khalid’s Orientalism is relevant to Russia insofar as it describes power relations in a concrete imperial/colonial context. Knight wouldn’t disagree with that, what bothers him is the extensive use of universal

<sup>8</sup> Knight, Nathaniel. *Grigor'ev in Orenburg, 1851-1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?* // *Slavic Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring, 2000), 74.

<sup>9</sup> Khalid, Adeeb. *Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism*. // *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 1, Number 4, Fall 2000 (New Series), 696.

model and “totalizing framework”. An important question Knight raises is the one about the relationship between scholarship and politics.

The person of Kosagovskij is a good example of how scholarship and politics can be intertwined. He’s a person where the individual approach used by Knight and the checks and balances of the universalism suggested by Khalid would be most reconciled together. He is a military official possessing a serious power. He openly recognizes that the goal of his work is promoting Russian interests by any means he can. He does not only passively follow the instructions, he even suggests new, supposedly more effective ways of exercising Russian influence in the region. His actions can certainly be viewed as a part of an imperial advance – in an imperial context. At the same time, Kosagovskij’s work, as the sources show, is constantly accompanied by a scholarly endeavor: he does not stay within the lines of his post, but he constantly seeks for a wider perspective. He makes articles on the local language, on the position of women, history of the Persian military, silkworms. Then, he writes extensively on the irrigation systems and the roads of Northern Iran, partly motivated by the usefulness of this information to the Russian army in case of war – and the circle closes itself.

Throwing more light on this person will be a contribute for us to know more about how Russian Empire exerted its influence in the neighbouring countries. To tell more about it, I will use Knight’s approach, focusing on a single person and trying to make all the conclusions out of the sources he left. But I will also be aware of the limitations such an approach imposes – the ones that Khalid and Todorova warn about - and try not to make any too general statements just out of the story of one man.

The archival materials concerning the relationship of Russian Empire and Iran, and in particular the activities of Russian military mission remain scarcely used by the scholars, except for a few references, used though just as an addition to the literature list.

The documents that the research is focused on are stored in the Russian State Military Historical Archive (RGVIA, РГВИА) in Moscow. The work was mostly conducted on the corpus called “Kosagovskii V.A.” (Косоговский В.А.). It contains 521 files (*dye/o*) and is divided into three parts according to their contents: “General notes” (1829-1918), “Information about Persia” (1881-1903) and “The affairs of Persian Cossack Brigade” (1900-1903). During his stay in Persia (1884-1903), Kosagovskii was writing detailed diaries with all important letters and documents attached to them. On retirement, he attempted to rework the materials he had acquired over those nine years by making a number of works: “Military forces of Persia”<sup>10</sup>, “The history of Persian Cossack Brigade”<sup>11</sup>, “Articles on Persia”<sup>12</sup> and some other ones. These works, however, did not get to be published before the Kosagovskii’s death. In 1918 he was shot by the revolutionaries in his mansion in Valdaj, central Russia.

The “Military forces of Persia” takes up the biggest part of the manuscript (503 sheets). Apart from the eyewitness’ accounts, it is written with the use of the works of the English authors – J. Malcolm, G. Curzon (Persia and the Persian Question)<sup>13</sup>, accounts of the Russian officers – prince A. G. Sherbatov “Field

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<sup>10</sup> RGVIA, f.76, op. 1, d. 378.

<sup>11</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217.

<sup>12</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371.

<sup>13</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 3-4. Malcolm J. *The History of Persia from the most early Period to the Present Time*. Vol. 1-2. L., 1815; Curzon G. *Persia and the Persian Question*. Vol. 1-2. L., 1892.

Marshal prince I.F. Paskevich", V. Potto "The Caucasian War" and so on.<sup>14</sup> A number of the Persian sources were used<sup>15</sup>; however, Kosagovskii approaches them in a critical way and is not inclined to trust them.

Highly important for the research is the "Diary of General V. A. Kosagovskii", bringing up the events of 1890-1909 on the 315 sheets of paper.<sup>16</sup> Concerning the fact that the majority of officers who got to be at the head of the Persian Cossack Brigade served before in the Caucasus military district, Kosagovskii several times mentions his personal acquaintance to his predecessors and successors on the post and gives characteristics to their personalities and activities.

Kosagovskii writes in details about the activities of Persian Cossack Brigade under his leadership. The author gives quite an explicit characteristic of the general direction of his actions by saying that he "had lifted the Russian case in Persia onto an unreachable height" by his actions.<sup>17</sup> Generally, as far as the documents let one make conclusions, the Russian politics had turned at that period to be very persistent in achieving its goals by using the Cossack Brigade as a means of influence.

The materials in the "Information about Persia by V.A. Kosagovskii (1898)" present various data on social and economic aspects of life in Iran<sup>18</sup> Here accounts on the silkworm breeding in Gilan,<sup>19</sup> irrigation and sewerage in provinces and

<sup>14</sup> RGVA f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 5-7. Shcherbatov A. G. *General-feldmarshal I. F. Paskevich. [Field Marshal General I. F. Paskevich]*. (Saint Petersburg, 1892); Potto V. A. *Kavkazskaya voyna. [Caucasian war]*. (Sevastopol, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217.

<sup>17</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217, 204.

<sup>18</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371.

<sup>19</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 1-9.

Tehran<sup>20</sup>, customs, morals and manners of the locals are found.<sup>21</sup>, showing a colourful picture of the Persian society at the time. The relevance of the information found on those various topics is that it shows the way in which Kosagovskii described them and referred to anything connected to Persia, thus, it allows to make conclusions about the officer's mindset and attitude.

Kosagovskii also deals in detail with what challenges Russian army might face during possible march through the Persian territory on India: at what time of the year is it best to start the march; what means and tools for the river crossing could be used by infantry, cavalry and artillery; what is the most necessary to have in the military transport and so on<sup>22</sup>. All the suggestions are brought with explaining commentaries why to act like that in every certain case.

The enormous amount of documentary works left by V. A. Kosagovskii still remains unpublished and thus hardly accessible for researchers. Only a small part of it on the early history of the Persian Cossack Brigade is an exception, it was published in the "New East" magazine.<sup>23</sup> Good news for the scholars is that the diary of Kosagovskii stored in the collection of the Saint Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts is now being prepared for publication. This is, however, only a drop in the ocean.

Apart from the previously mentioned files, the corpus "Kosagovskii V.A>" also holds materials describing in detail the biggest and the most important Persian provinces, such as Astrabad<sup>24</sup>, Azerbaijan,<sup>25</sup> Khorasan,<sup>26</sup> Gilan and Mazandaran<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 99-148.

<sup>22</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 77-80.

<sup>23</sup> Novyi Vostok [New Orient], nn. 3,4 (Moscow, 1923).

<sup>24</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 145, 187.

<sup>25</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 140, 227.

and so on. Taking into account the importance of the main roads for the transportation of the army, it is no surprise that Kosagovskii gives a detailed report on the condition of Anzali-Tehran and Anzali-Qazvin roads on the north of the country, with the remarks on geodesy and cartography.<sup>26</sup>

Other officers also left a number of reports and notes, not comparable in volume with the ones made by Kosagovskii. Detailed reports of colonel Domontovich contain various information on the talks with the Persian government, about the formation of the Cossack Brigade, about difficulties and successes achieved.<sup>27</sup> Some information can be extruded out of the official reports of the Domontovich's successors in the office – Kuzmin-Karavaev, Schneur, Belgarde. The amount of those reports and notes, however, is much less in comparison to the ones of Kosagovskii and Domontovich.

The archival materials in the Kosagovskii file are all manuscripts written by the officer themselves. Considering the fact that all of them are given as microfilms, it is rarely possible to judge on the quality of the paper, its format and peculiarities. In the most cases the script of the author is clear and readable. The information is set forth in an orderly and logical way.

The thesis will make use of a vast corpus of auxiliary literature. One important category of it is published personal sources, such as memoirs, diaries, voyage descriptions, ethnographic sketches and so on. The most relevant part for this research was written and published in Russian in the end of the 19th century. It is important to mention that the travelogues were the main source that brought light

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<sup>26</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 252.

<sup>27</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 131.

<sup>28</sup> RGVA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 179, 182, 224, 184, 365.

<sup>29</sup> RGVA, f. 446, op. 1, d. 43, 44.

to the contemporary problems of Iran for the Russian public. They played an important role in the development of Russian historical and Orientalist thought.

Usually such books are following the style of regional geography, including more or less details information on geography, topography and demography of the relevant areas, with digressions into history and economics. If the author was a military man, he was obviously more interested in the specific topics; visited regions were often viewed as a possible future seat of war. Obviously, such works were more often than never inspired by respectful orders from the Russian General Staff. Because of such reasons, works of this type contain detailed descriptions of the routes, orography, hydrography, strategic points etc. Such works are relevant for the research as a point of comparison with the writings of Kosagovskii.

During the work on the thesis also a number of more general books were studied. Among those were the works on commercial and economic relations of Russia and Iran, international relations in the Middle East, works on colonialism and Orientalism and other monographs that in one way or another were relevant to the problems of the research.

Soviet Iranian studies in 20's and 30's were mostly concerned with the problems of national liberation movements, viewed from the point of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The impossibility to have access to the sources and limitations imposed by the ideology has led such works quite specific to be called objective. Often they are based on the contemporary Western works. The topic of the Persian Cossack Brigade was viewed as negative and thus not deserving much of a research; it makes sense to remind that Kosagovskii was shot during the revolution as a nobleman and imperial general.



The works of the next generations of iranists in Russia, such as L. S. Agaev,<sup>30</sup> M. S. Ivanov,<sup>31</sup> Kulagina L. M.<sup>32</sup> and others, despite pertaining Marxist approach have a good level of bibliography and show a deep level of research, thus, are important for this thesis as a good source of factual material, despite the fact that the Persian Cossack Brigade and its officers were never studied as such.

Foreign narrative literature of Iran of the 19th and early twentieth century is also vast. The pictures of Iran – most of them written by the English – are full of descriptions of nature, antiquities, morals and manners of the locals. Such works as “Persia and Persian Riot” by W. Berard<sup>33</sup> and “Ten thousand miles in Persia” by P. Sykes<sup>34</sup> can be named. Among them stands separate the work of J. Curzon called “Persia and the Persian Question”.<sup>35</sup> The information presented by Curzon is of great importance for study of Iran in the end of the 19th century and does not contradict to the data mentioned by the Russian officers.

Western historiography shows a good level of research of socio-economic and political aspects of the history of Iran on the border between the 19th and twentieth centuries. The works of the historians of Iranian origin Firuz Kazemzadeh and Hafiz Farmayan proved to be very useful for the research. The authors base their studies on the published Russian archival materials and documents of the Iranian ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>36</sup> Firuz Kazemzadeh proves to be one of a few

<sup>30</sup> Agaev S. L. *Germanskii imperialism v Irane*. [German imperialism in Iran]. (Moscow, 1969).

<sup>31</sup> Ivanov M. S. *Iranskaya revoliutsiya 1905-1911 gg.* [Iranic revolution of 1905-1911]. (Moscow, 1957).

<sup>32</sup> Kulagina L. M. *Ekspansiya angliyskogo imperialism v Irane v konce XIX – nachale XX vekov.* [Expansion of the English imperialism in Iran in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries]. (Moscow, 1981).

<sup>33</sup> Berar V. *Persiya i persidskaya smuta*. [Persia and the Persian mutiny]. (Saint Petersburg, 1912).

<sup>34</sup> Sykes P.M. *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia or Eight Years in Iran*. (L., 1902).

<sup>35</sup> Curzon G. *Persia and the Persian Question*. Vol. 1-2. L., 1892.

<sup>36</sup> Kazemzadeh F. *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914. A Study in Imperialism*. L., 1968; Farman Farmayan H. *The Forces of Modernization in the 19th Century. Iran. A Historical Survey. Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East*. (Chic. – L., 1968).

who pays special attention in one of his articles to the Brigade itself. Other than that, the Western historiography is generally not making the Brigade and its office a central focus of the research, which will be hopefully partly compensated by this thesis.

The object of the research is the reconstruction of the Russian officer colonel Kosagovskii's way of thinking in what regards his duties in Iran – as an official in the service of the Persian Shah as well as an acting officer subordinate to the Russian General Staff.

The base of the research are the sources colonel Kosagovskii left after himself. These are notes, sketches and articles reflecting his perception of the country he was working in, people and their culture. The notes are expected to give a comprehensive picture of what the colonel's mindset was, how he perceived his duties and how he sought to achieve them, being the head of such an important army unit as the Persian Cossack Brigade was.

Chronologically the paper mainly stays in the ranks of 1893-1906, the period when colonel Kosagovskii was on his duty in Tehran. However, there are also some exceptions beyond this period, as the diaries and notes written before the start of the job as an instructor in the Brigade give valuable information, and also some of the records were made after the Colonel's comeback to Russia.

The goal of the research is, through analysis of the colonel Kosagovskii's texts, and by figuring out his world outlook through these notes, to show how his realization of his role as a Russian officer in Iran affected his actual performance and actions on his position. The final result will show how relevant is it to call

Kosagovskii an imperialist and an orientalist and to what extent his activities and his plans were in line with the Russian imperial policy in Iran. The research will also attempt to throw a light on the reasons for fluctuating of the Russian government's attitude towards the brigade, and answer if there was any general plan of actions in connection with the unit and Russian politics in Iran in general.

The scientific novelty of the research is evident at least from the fact that by far there is still no comprehensive and qualified work on the history of the Persian Cossack Brigade as such, however significant this unit was in the history of Persia, Russian Empire and even England. Obviously, no one even made an attempt to look closer at the personalities that were making the Brigade. The personality and history of colonel Kosagovskii are extraordinary, in some way an embodiment of the Brigade as it was at the time, and a big part of Russian empire's politics in Persia. It certainly deserves more attention than it ever had before.

## Chapter 1. Persian Army and the Origins of the Persian Cossack Brigade.

### §1. Foreign powers in the 19th century Persia.

During the whole 19th century Iran was largely an agrarian country, where traditional and patriarchal relations of production ruled. Since the mid-19th century the number of connections of Persia with the European states started to grow, which spurred the development of commodity-money relations in Iran.<sup>37</sup>

More than half of a country's 9-10 million population<sup>38</sup> were settled peasants who were working the land. About a quarter of the inhabitants, represented by tribes of various ethnic composition – Kurds, Lurs, Bakhtiyaris, Balochi, Qashqai, Turkmens, Arabs and so on, were preoccupied with nomadic cattle-breeding. Only a fifth of the population inhabited the cities.<sup>39</sup>

The state control over the land was organized poorly. Taxation, for instance, was built on medieval principles, involved many extraordinary taxes and requisitions that depended on the will of the local rulers and tax-collectors. Needless to say, only a part of the collected money could reach Tehran. The central government's inability to concentrate the tax collection under its control, says American scholar

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<sup>37</sup> Irandust. *Persiya vchera i segodnya* [*Persia Yesterday and Today*]. (Moscow, 1927), 9. N. A. Kuznetsova. *Iran v pervoy polovine XIX veka* [*Iran in the First Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*]. (Moscow, 1983), 83.

<sup>38</sup> Curzon G. *Persia and the Persian Question*, Vol. 2. L., 1892. P. 404.

<sup>39</sup> M. S. Ivanov. *Babidskiye vosstaniya v Irane(1848-1952 gg.)*. [*Babid revolts in Iran(1848-1852)*] (Moscow, 1939), 30.

V. F. Nowshirvani, was the main reason why the state became unable to maintain an effective bureaucratic apparatus and a regular army.<sup>40</sup>

By the period in the focus of the paper – last quarter of the 19th century – the country ruled by Nasr al-Din Shah (1848-1896) was already actively involved into the famous confrontation between the Russian and British Empires, which was also known as the “Great Game”.

In the second half of the 19th century the need for reforms was felt in Iran so keenly that it came to be one of the decisive factors that led to the Babid uprisings (1848-1852). The first attempts at a reform were undertaken by Mirza Taghi-khan Farakhani (Amir-e Kabir), the grand vizier at Nasr al-Din Shah’s court. The administrative apparatus was reduced, the state lands underwent a revision, the first secular educational institution, *Dar al-Fonun*, was created. The reforms started well, but did not last for too long, as Mirza Taghi-khan’s veins were open by his groomer in the his own bathhouse in Kashan –such was the order of the Shah who was instigated by his courtiers. The reforms that had already taken place started to meet strong resistance, and at times the sources suggest that such an attitude was secretly supported by Russia or Britain.<sup>41</sup>

In 1873 Nasr al-Din shah became the first Persian monarch to agree to make a trip to Europe. He repeated this trip later twice, in 1878 and 1889. Some of the high Persian officials who organized the trips, presumably hoped to persuade the Shah of the necessity of reforms by showing him how advanced Europe was. The

<sup>40</sup> Nowshirvani V.F. *The Beginnings of Commercialized Agriculture in Iran. The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*. Edited by A.L. Udovitch, Princeton. New Jersey, 1981., 561.

<sup>41</sup> N. A. Kuznetsova. *Politicheskoye i sotsialno-ekonomicheskoye polozheniye Irana v kontse XVIII-pervoy polovine XIX v. [Political and socio-economic situation in Iran in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries]* (Moscow: 1978), 109.

results of the trips, however, were not exactly as they expected. Tremendous sums of money were expended in the opulence and comfort of the Shah, and the reforms did not succeed. Partly to make do with the growing expenses, Russia and Britain were granted monopoly concessions that gave the two great powers control over a goodly part of Persia's economy.

Among those was the concession for the establishment by the English of the Shahanshah (Imperial) Bank (1889) that had the monopoly right to issue paper banknotes. As a solution, the gold reserve of Persia began to go slowly to the British treasury. The Persian government had apparently foreseen this, and to counteract the Shahanshah bank's influence, the Russian Loan and Development Bank was created (1890). It used the loans as levers of influence on some of the high Persian officials. Likewise, as a counterweight to the English concession for navigation on the Karoun river (1872), the Russian empire's representative Lianozov was given monopoly right for fishing in the Caspian (1873). In 1862, 1865 and 1872 Britain signed agreements to build telegraph lines through Iran to India. In 1879 the Russian Empire signed an analogous document allowing it to build and use a telegraph line from Astrabad to Kishlar. Thus, however reckless the Persian Government might have acted at the first glance, it never gave favor just to one side, and tried to balance between the two, getting its profit out of the Great Game. With the feeble support from within the state, such a tactic was perhaps the Shah's best choice.

The relative political independence of Persia, all the same, still remained based not so much on the power of the Shah, as on the rivalry of the two main colonial powers in the area. The backwardness of the Persian economy was

reflected in the political life of the country. The state was governed by administrative abuse of discretion, bribery and sales of administrative offices.

According to some of the Western historians of Iran, Britain attempted to find a path for the Persian economy out of crisis and isolation, whereas Russia was throwing wrenches in the spokes of state and perniciously influencing any attempts for the reform by actively intervening with the inner life of the country – by the means of the Persian Cossack Brigade as well.<sup>42</sup>

However accurate such a statement may be, it is undoubtedly true that the foreign powers perceived the Persian army as one of the most important sources of influence. In order to better appreciate the relation between intervention on the ground and foreign perceptions, I will first offer an overview of the Brigade's prior activities.

## **§2. The irregular army of Iran**

Researchers and contemporaries divided the Persian army into two large parts: regular and irregular. Up until the beginning of the 19th century a regular army did not exist, and the armed forces consisted of local militias organized by khans or foremen, and was summoned by the Shah in the case of need.<sup>43</sup>

Such a structure of the irregular army remained practically unchanged during the whole 19th century. The militia, called *savar*, meaning “mounted”, consisted predominantly out of cavalry of the nomadic tribes. There were no permanent lists of staff. In case of war an assembly of the troops was started by the

<sup>42</sup> Kazemzadeh F. *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914*. L., 1968. P. 100; Keddie N.R. *Qajar Iran and The Rise of Reza Khan (1796-1925)*. L., 1999. P. 43-44.

<sup>43</sup> I. R. Rozenblium. *Persidskaya armiya. S kratkim istoricheskim ocherkom razvitiya vooruzhennykh sil Persii s XIX v. [The Persian Army. With a short historical essay on the development of the armed forces in Persia from 19<sup>th</sup> century]*. (Tehran, 1922), 4.

*firman*(personal order) of the Shah. The *firman* usually stated how many units of infantry and cavalry were required from each khan receiving the *firman*, and where was the rallying point.<sup>44</sup>

Taking into account the vast territories of the state, the irregular army could be assembled en masse only months after receiving the *firman*. Following the end of the war, the government was unable to maintain the army. Fearing possible disorders, it would dismiss the undisciplined mass of troops, leaving only a small force necessary for the domestic order.<sup>45</sup>

Kosagovskii, familiar from introduction, characterizes the Persian irregular troops as a “sinister force, virtually raw material that could play one or another role depending not so much on political circumstances, as on the figure who controlled it”.<sup>46</sup>

Tribal chief when summoned by the shah was obliged to supply a certain amount of horsemen. The duty of armoring and the equipping of the riders fell on the tribe itself. When the cavalry was engaged in the fighting, every horseman had the right to receive a salary from the state. The salary was low and paid irregularly. Due to the lack of food and money the horsemen would often rob the local population: “those defenders of the Fatherland immensely pillage the same lands they are ought to be protecting”<sup>47</sup>

The recruitment problem reflected the ethnic composition of the tribes. Its composition was varied. Very often even different small tribes had their history,

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<sup>44</sup> RGVIA, f. 446, d. 5, 2.

<sup>45</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 23; Curzon G. *Persia and the Persian Question*, Vol. 2.( L., 1892).,127.

<sup>46</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 242, 4.

<sup>47</sup> RGVIA, f. 446, d. 5, 3.



traditions, physical and distinct mental qualities. All of these factors inevitably affected the army, acting upon the character and, at times, battle readiness of the army units.

The largest in number, were Iranian peoples, located west of the Zagros mountains, Fars, Caspian regions in the north, Makran and Baluchistan in the south, and some parts of the Eastern and Central Iran. A number of Iranian ethnos in Persia, such as Lurs, Bakhtiyaris, Kurds and so on, were often times against the centralizing politics. Their political claims were opposed by the Shiite Persians, whose importance in the state slowly started to rise. The Persians, also called Farsis, made up to 60% of the whole population of Iran at the time.<sup>48</sup>

The second big section of the population of the land was made up of the people of Turko-Mongolic origin, who inhabited mainly the northwest and southeast (Qashqai) and east (Afshar) of the land. Kosagovskii calls this group “Turko-Tatars”; they amounted to 29% of the entire population.

The Arabs were a relatively small group in Persia, mostly concentrated in the South of Khuzestan and along the Persian Gulf shore. The Persian arabs, many of whom held on to their Bedouin way of life, were waging constant wars against their neighbours, nomadic Luri, Bakhtiyari and Kurdish tribes. Those internal strifes were what mostly determined the political environment of the southwestern Iran.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 50.

<sup>49</sup> O. I. Zhigalina. *Etnosotsialnaya evolutsiya iranskogo obsh'estva. [Ethnosocial evolution of the Iranian society]. (Moscow, 1996), 70-72.*

According to W. Trubetskoj, "The tribes were the source of constant disorders and internal wars in Iran, being one of the main centrifugal forces that were resisting the creation of a centralized state".<sup>50</sup>

Despite the fact that the central government did, in fact, at times controlled tribes by imposing harsh methods, in general, it was very careful when it had to deal with the nomads. The court of the Shah tried to avoid any discord with the tribal chiefs, as alienating the chiefs' good will might cut off their military support for the shah. The distinctive features of the nomadic life made the tribes a constant fight-ready force, which was the reason why during the centuries they were the mainstay of the Persian army.

Hence, the irregular army of Iran in the concluding quarter of the 19th century consisted out of irregular cavalry of the nomadic tribes and territorial, or provincial, militia. The Persian state was a conglomerate of disconnected provinces, with poor communications between them. The independence of the khan's rule was following out of this disconnectedness. The lack of control had always been a danger for the shah's power, specially counting the fact that the tribal leaders could come up with a 150,000 horsemen. In the peace time the khans that did not have any permanent military obligations, could assemble and dismiss units at will, often harming the interests of the state.

After the regular army had been created, the numbers of the irregular cavalry and militia went down noticeably. The nomadic cavalry did not cease to exist, but the state could count on their help only in case of their sympathy for a war.

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<sup>50</sup> Trubetskoi V. V.. *Rol osedlo-kochevych plemen Irana v period novogo vremeni. Ocherk novoi istorii Irana. [Role of settled and nomadic tribes of Iran in the Early Modern Period. An essay on the Modern history of Iran].* (Moscow, 1978), 176.

### §3. The Persian regular army

The first regular units in the Qajar state were created in the beginning of the 19th century by a talented prince Abbas Mirza. The prince saw the shortcomings of the militia in the clashes with the Russian regular forces and concluded that it was necessary to create a regular ground forces following the model of the Western European powers<sup>51</sup>

The reformer, having adopted new European constitution and introduced European formation and education in the army, sent forth the basics of recruitment, management and command unchanged. This contributed to the fact that, after a number of successes, the work of Abbas Mirza did not survive its creator, and by the end of the of the 19th century the Persian army did not witness any major alterations.

The regular Persian army by the end of the 19th century had little prospect as a fighting force. Formally, the army consisted out of cavalry, artillery and infantry, that were supposed to a certain point to be armed and equipped according to European (Austrian) standards. Agreeing to the mobilization lists of the Persian government, the army numbered up to 150-200 thousand men.<sup>52</sup>

The Russian military specialists, who based their conclusions on the field research and actual present staff in cavalry, infantry and artillery, however, estimated the total size of the army of around 50 thousand men.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 27-38.

<sup>52</sup> Curzon G. *Persia and the Persian Question*, 127.

<sup>53</sup> Rozenblium, *Persidskaya armiya*, 6.

The regular cavalry, or the *Gholam* guard was a special unit designed to protect the shah. The guard owed its creation to the fact that irregular forces were considered as highly unreliable. The *gholams* of the Shah made up the most privileged part of the Persian army. For a long time, until the Cossack Brigade was created, the mounted *gholams* were considered as one of the most battle-worthy and loyal units of the army.

The artillery, or *topkhane*, by the end of the 19th century was one of the weakest chains in the Persian armed forces, keeping its old, bulky organizational structure. The personnel, according to the official information, counted up to 15 battalions and 34 regiments, most of them, however, existed only on paper.<sup>54</sup>

The recruitment of the regular infantry, *peyade*, was territorially-based. There existed a *firman* signed by the shah that fixed the upper limit of the population eligible to be recruited as two percent.<sup>55</sup> However, the recruiting was conducted arbitrarily, ignoring the actual size of population living in the territorial unit.<sup>56</sup>

The law determined a 20-year period of service for the soldiers. In fact, a soldier, *sarbaz*, could stay in the army for a lifetime in case he failed to save enough money to buy a leave from his officer, or find a substitute for himself.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the army often had teenagers and old men serving next to each other.

Ideally, every three years a soldier had a year of leave. In reality, more than a half of the regiments were dismissed and left to live at home. The number of men actually on service ranged from a quarter to a third of the personnel. One of the worst vices of the Persian army was the sale of ranks and appointments. Apart from

<sup>54</sup> Curzon G. *Persia and the Persian Question*, 139.

<sup>55</sup> RGVIA, f. 446, d. 39, 11.

<sup>56</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, d. 252, 3.

<sup>57</sup> RGVIA, f. 446, d. 39, 4.

inheriting an appointment, it could also been bought. No appointment or promotion of an officer could be effected without a bribe to a higher officer, minister or the shah.<sup>58</sup>

The aforementioned military leave was the largest and most reliable source of income for the officers. In case of a leave, *sarbaz* had to pay a sum of several *tumans* to his commander to be allowed to go, and also the officer kept the soldier's allowance for the period of leave for himself.

It will be wrong to say that no attempts to improve the state of affairs in the army was made. By the end of the 19th century in Persia two military schools for the future officers were opened. The schools, however, lacked a systematized program, and often the content of the classes depended just on the taste of the teacher. The above-mentioned *Dar ol-Fonun*, opened by vizier Farakhani, also failed to provide Persian army with the qualified officers. Despite the fact that the education in *Dar ol-Fonun* was well organized and in a thorough manner, in more than a twenty years the graduates sought employment in all the departments except for the military.<sup>59</sup>

The efforts to make a change in the officers' educational level undertaken by Nasr al-Din Shah did not stop here. Soon after the second trip to Europe in 1878 there was established a royal school on the model of a French lycee. This school had a branch of military education with two Prussian officers at the head of it.<sup>60</sup> In the beginning of the 80's the class of artillery had 30 students, and the infantry class had 45. Clearly unsatisfied with those numbers, Naib al-Saltane, the minister

<sup>58</sup> Vulfson E. S. *Persy v ich proshlom i nastoyash'em. [The Persians in their past and present].* (Moscow, 1909), 116.

<sup>59</sup> Rozenblium, *Persidskaya armiya...*, 8.

<sup>60</sup> Curzon G. *Persia and the Persian Question*, 143.

of military, established in 1885 a Staff College with 150 students in it. The graduates of the school were assigned the rank of a colonel and were given the right to command a battalion.<sup>61</sup>

The aforementioned educational institutions, obviously, taught only the children of the noblest families to train them to be active and efficient officers. The lack of system, however, and constant change of the teachers were serious barriers to the effective education.

Obtaining competent officers to the army by giving the soldiers a chance to be promoted was completely unthinkable in the Persian army; this encouraged passivity and idleness among the ranks. Considering the situation when the biggest part of the personnel were on official or unofficial leave, the very thought of organizing the education on the army's grounds seemed unreal.

Soldiers were not taught the manual and care of arms, as a consequence most of the guns did not function. There was practically no target practice, soldiers were not taught how to clean, assemble and disassemble their guns and basically did not know how to use it properly. Target practice was ignored in order to conserve ammunition; it was also impractical to attempt to conduct maneuvers as the regiments had usually only a quarter of the personnel present. The discipline was very weak, and, according to N. Mamontov, the soldiers were often regarded their commanders with hostility.

The financial control of the army was arbitrary and corrupt. Material security was one of the most deplorable aspects of the Persian army. Wages involved a

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<sup>61</sup> Frankini. *Zapiska o persidskoi armii ot 20 sentyabria 1877 g.*//*Sbornik materialov po Azii, Vyp. 4. [A note on the Persian army from the 20th of September of 1877// Materials on Asia, 4<sup>th</sup> issue].*(Saint Petersburg, 1883), 9.

long and tangled bureaucratic process, with every broker demanding their share. When the regimental commanders would finally receive what remained, they would keep the currency to themselves and pay the soldiers in vegetables or wheat.<sup>62</sup> Thus, a Persian soldier practically speaking did not receive wages, allowance or uniform, and was forced to earn his living himself even while on active military service.<sup>63</sup> As a rule, in summer about three quarters of the soldiers were on a leave or just were voluntarily absent to earn some money for a living. They took part in agricultural field works, or sold small items on the streets.<sup>64</sup>

The unflattering and ludicrous condition of the combat strength of the Persian army did not depreciate personal qualities of a Persian soldier. The sources mention most satisfactory comments on a *sarbaz*: “He is strongly built, deft, patient and enduring; his temperance in eating is one of his main virtues; his quick wit and keenness of observation often startled the Europeans. A Persian soldier has very valuable qualities for an infantryman: he easily endures asperities, long marches and he is resistant to fatigue”.<sup>65</sup> The general opinion of the Russian officers was that the Persian regular army was manned by sturdy recruits, that, under the command of skilled officers and with better administration, they could form an outstanding army in no time. Undoubtedly, such an opinion added to the arguments for establishing the Cossack Brigade in Tehran. Any attempt to start a thorough reorganization of the Persian armed forces in general was time and time again paralyzed by the lack of organization of the regular military service, the impotence

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<sup>62</sup> RGVA, f. 446, d. 39, 8.

<sup>63</sup> K. I. Benderev. *Poezdki po rayonu v 1902 g. Generalnogo Shtaba polkovnika Bendereva. [General Staff colonel Benderev's trips around the region in 1902].* (Ashgabad, 1904), 251.

<sup>64</sup> *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya v epokhu imperializma. Dokumenty iz arkhivov tsarskogo i vremennogo pravitelstv, 1878-1917. Chast pervaya, 1878-1900 gg.* [International relations in the epoch of imperialism. Documents from the archives of the tsarist and temporary governments, 1878-1917. Part one, 1878-1900]. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1939), 154.

<sup>65</sup> Vulfson, *Persy w ich proshlom i nastoyashem*, 114.

of the central government in Tehran compared to the independence of the provinces and, last but not the least, continuing lack of money.

Thus, by the end of the 19th century Iran still did not have a regular army in its true sense. The structure that bore such a name was an untrained, unprepared and incapable of quality military service. The state of affairs in the military quite simply followed the state of affairs in the Persian administration. The embezzlement of public funds and sale of ranks were the foundation of state organization. The Persian soldiers, with almost no pay, robbed by their own authorities, were leading a dog's life. They were forced by the circumstances to do handicraft, small trade or even robbery and brigandage. The mass military leaves also did not add to the combat value of the Persian army. Such a structure was very difficult for the Persian government and the shah to lean on, and the need for a support was felt keenly.

#### **§4. The Persian Cossack Brigade**

The creation of the Persian Cossack Brigade was a part of an ongoing process of reforming the Persian Regular Army. The Western powers tried to exercise their influence over different spheres of life in Iran, most noticeably, in the economic, as presented earlier. Obviously they could not miss the chance to take part in the Persian army, especially as their intentions coincided with the shah's desire.

To create a European army, Persian government invited European instructors and consultants. The most prominent early attempt of such kind was made in 1878, when with the aid of the officers from Vienna the "Austrian Corps" were made. The officers distributed the Austrian uniform among all the Persian



regular infantry, but unfortunately their successes did not go beyond this. The Corps was disbanded de jure in 1892, having stopped working de facto about seven years before that.

The establishment of the Cossack Brigade was second step of the Europeanizing reform process. When on his second trip to Europe in 1878, Nasr al-Din Shah admired the uniforms, arms and training of the Cossack forces that escorted him during his trip through the Caucasus<sup>66</sup>. Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, governor-general of the Caucasus in 1862-1881, was requested to establish a similar Cossack regiment in Persia. The official Saint Petersburg decided to grant the appeal. According to the American scholar Muriel Atkin, the initiative in creating the Brigade was fully on the Persian side: the request was fulfilled despite the fact that “at that time there was no clear policy other than generally to promote the Russian influence in Persia”<sup>67</sup>.

The head of the mission was chosen by the Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich himself, and soon “the royal assent of His Highness” was granted.<sup>68</sup> The mission was headed by lieutenant colonel of General Staff Alexei Domontovich, who had previously served for 12 years in the Cossack cavalry and knew its structure well<sup>69</sup>.

The personnel of the mission consisted out of three Cossack officers and five Cossack sergeants, all of whom had previously served in Kuban or Terek Cossack armies. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 1879, the mission arrived in Tehran. The commanding

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66 Muriel Atkin, *Russia and Iran, 1780-1828* Univ Of Minnesota Press; Minnesota Archive Editions edition (May 1, 1980). 329.

67 Ibid, 330.

68 S. Iranskii, M. Pavlovich. *Persiya v bor'be za nezavisimost'*. [Persia struggling for independence]. (Moscow, 1925), 85.

69 O. A. Krasnyak. *Stanovlenie iranskoi reguliarnoi armii v 1879-1921 gg.* [Creation of the Iranian regular army in 1879-1921]. (Moscow, 2007), 53.

officer was requested to create a cavalry regiment out of 400 men<sup>70</sup>. Upon his arrival in Tehran, Domontovich held successful negotiations about the future organization and composition of the Cossack unit, having persuaded the shah to organize a stable system of financing for it. Having started his work in April of 1879, already in summer Domontovich impressed the shah with the results to such a scale that Nasr al-Din decided to add a platoon to the regiment, thus creating a Brigade.

One of the main achievements of Domontovich was that he persuaded the shah to hand over financial control to the officer at the head of the Brigade. The financing traditionally was one of the weakest sides in the organizational structure of the Persian armed forces, and by making this move the possibility of embezzlement was minimized<sup>71</sup>.

The first 400 men to serve in the Cossack regiment were recruited out of *mohajers*<sup>72</sup>, descendants of the noble Muslim families that moved to Iran from the Caucasus during the Russian-Persian wars in the beginning of the 19th century. After that the unit was enlarged up to 600 men, the other 200 were recruited as volunteers. Among them were nomadic Kurds, Turkmens, Afghans and other provincials. The ethnic makeup of the Brigade was rather heterogeneous.

The uniform of the Persian Cossacks copied the one of the Russian units in the Caucasus. Weapons were forged in Tehran under the supervision of Russian specialists. For training, abridged Russian army regulations were used. For the first time in the Persian armed forces a system of training was introduced: first every

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<sup>70</sup> RGVIA, f.446, d.43, 103.

<sup>71</sup> Krasnyak O. A., Ibid, 56.

Cossack received an individual training; then the education went to the level of a unit, and finally up to the training at the level of the Brigade as a whole. In this way, all the units were trained and educated in an equal manner<sup>73</sup>.

The contract gave very wide authorities to the Russian officer at the head of the Brigade. In Persia, he was subject officially only to the Persian minister of war<sup>74</sup>. According to the Persian historian doctor Abd al-Hossein Zarrinkoob, however, “the Cossack Brigade was subject to the ministry of war only at first, and gradually it became de-facto independent... the commander [of the Brigade] followed only Russian orders and did take Persia into consideration”. He also puts the Brigade alongside with the concessions that put Iran in dependency from the Western powers<sup>75</sup>.

Despite the successes that Domontovich achieved during his three-year period of service, after the end of the contract he was called back and replaced by colonel Piotr Charkovskii.

In accordance with the official version, Domontovich was dismissed because of disobedience – he did not always follow the orders of the Russian embassy and, particularly, its head Privy Councilor Zinovyev. As it becomes clear from a secret telegram send by Zinovyev, Domontovich sought to achieve an official status of the head of the Russian mission and a military advisor, justifying his attempts as a means of becoming more influential at the Persian court. According to Zinovyev, such pretensions were absolutely ungrounded<sup>76</sup>. Consequently, he persuaded the

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73 Rittikh P. A. *Politiko-statisticheskii ocherk Persii. [Political and statistic essay on Persia]*. (Saint Petersburg, 1889), 150.

74 O. A. Krasnyak, *Ibid*, 64.

75 Zarrinkoob, Abd al-Hossein. *Ruzgaran [Epochs]*. (Tehran, 1380[2002]), 859.

<sup>76</sup> RGVIA, f.446, d.44, 6.

Russian ministry of Foreign affairs and Russian military commandment at the Caucasus that prolongation of the contract of Domontovich in Iran was intolerable. According to the insider information provided by Kosagovskii, the real reason for dismissal was based on the Zinovyev's slander, who claimed that Domontovich was acting against Russian interest, intending to create a substantial armed force for Iran<sup>77</sup>. This accusation was enough for the Russian minister of war P. Vanovskii to reject a renewal of the Domontovich's contract despite a personal request by Nasr al-Din Shah.

Two conclusions can be drawn out of this. First of all, at least in the early stages, Russia did not openly consider or understand the potential of the Brigade as a tool in foreign politics. Otherwise, it would not have prevented its successful development. Secondly, the Brigade was not under the full control from the Russian side, which could have also prevented the General Staff from developing it further. One or another way, viewing the Brigade on its early stages entirely as a concession and a tool of Russian imperial politics is wrong. A brief note made by Kosagovskii allows one to make an important hypothesis. The Brigade was created on the initiative of the Persian side, and Russia did it rather with a good grace, perhaps with some thoughts of using the Brigade further on, with the general idea of expanding its influence, but definitely without an immediate imperialistic plan.

Some tension in relations between the head of the Cossack Brigade and the head of the Russian military mission continued to be a problem, however, because of lack of regulation on this question by the Russian authorities. It was only after the Persian Constitutional revolution of 1905-1911 that the Russian Government made

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<sup>77</sup> Kosagovskii V. A. *Ocherk razvitiya Persidskoi Kazachyei Brigady*// *Novyi Vostok*, №4. [An essay on the development of the Persian Cossack Brigade// *New East*, №4]. (Moscow, 1923), 392.

a clear statement of this problem: Russian officers were not to obey to any orders of the Persian side if they contradicted Russian interests in any measure<sup>78</sup>.

Colonel Charkovskii continued the work of Domontovich. In 1883 another regiment was added to the Brigade alongside with the veteran and guard squadrons and a music ensemble. Thus, the Brigade turned into a division. Also, a cavalry artillery battery with 4 guns was added. Because of the fact that the regular Persian army, in fact, did not have a functioning artillery branch and the soldiers did not have an idea on how to use the guns, Charkovskii composed the “Guide to the training of the Cossack Cavalry artillery”, that was translated to Persian and printed in Tehran in 1885.<sup>79</sup>

Charkovskii also did not stay in Tehran longer than his 3-year contract allowed. Nasr al-Din Shah made a second attempt to invite Domontovich, but in vain. The next person appointed from the General Staff was colonel A. N. Kuzmin-Karavaev.

The primary problem that Kuzmin-Karavaev had to face were the debts incurred by the Brigade. The new commander introduced a thorough retrenchment of expenditures in the whole Brigade, that helped to pay off the debts, but, as a result of it, the number of personnel was significantly cut. Officially the Brigade numbered up to 800 men, but de-facto only 200-300 men were on the actual service, as the new colonel used the traditional Persian technique of letting soldiers go on a non-paid leave<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Atkin, Muriel. *Russia and Iran, 1780-1828*, 333.

<sup>79</sup> Krasnyak O. A., *Ibid*, 65, 66.

<sup>80</sup> Misl-Rustem. *Persiya pri Nasreddin-shakhe s 1882 po 1888 g. Ocherki v rasskazakh. [Persia under Nasr al-Din Shah from 1882 to 1888. Sketches in short stories.]* (Saint Petersburg, 1897), 146.

Despite the rather poor results, Kuzmin-Karavaev stayed in the Brigade by far the longest, for 4 years. After him, colonel A. K. Schneur was appointed, as the one having some experience of working in China, e.g. in the Orient<sup>81</sup>. The Brigade at that period of time was rather treated by imperial Russia as a reserve, a spare trump card. There was no intention neither of expanding the unit, nor of bringing it at least in the state it was under colonel Domontovich.

The Brigade faced a recurrent financial crisis, to which poor management of Schneur added. Colonel Schneur, being apparently not familiar with the Persian reality, kept on expecting an extraordinary dotation from the Persian government, which itself was struggling with the finances. Official Tehran offered only constant empty promises, which Schneur believed. Drought and failure of crops that happened in 1890, added to the poor state of affairs.

Schneur also did not abandon the usual method of letting the personnel out on the non-paid leave. By the moment Schneur was called back in May, 1893, the Brigade counted only 300 men, including only 170 horsemen.

The state of affairs in the Brigade seemed to be so hopeless that the Minister of War Naib al-Saltane, influenced by the English, proposed to the Shah to abolish the Brigade as such and simply create a convoy of 165 Cossacks instead. At the same time German diplomatic representative, sure about the inevitable abolition of the Brigade, led negotiations on replacement of the Russian instructors with the German ones, as the Germany also sought to spread its influence in Iran.

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<sup>81</sup> Kosagovskii V. A., *Ocherk razvitiya Persidskoi Kazachyei Brigady*, 400.

In the situation like this Russian General Staff decided to select the next commander more carefully. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, 1894 Colonel Vladimir Andreevich Kosagovskii was introduced as the new head of the Russian mission in Tehran.

By the time of his appointment colonel Kosagovskii had already had a good command of the Persian language and dialects, which he acquired during a number of inspection visits to the country<sup>82</sup>. Kosagovskii proved himself to be a capable and effective manager in the difficult situation he had to face upon his arrival to the Brigade. In a very short time he called the personnel out of the leave and started a new recruitment. After merely three months of intense training, on the 2nd of September, 1894 he was able to get to the Shah's parade 500 of trained and equipped mounted Cossacks. That put an end to all the talks of disbanding the unit.

Another issue that Kosagovskii had to dole out was the unreasonable abundance of the officers in the Brigade. To stop the practice of inheriting the officer ranks, or getting them by protection or bribery, Kosagovskii introduced a new order. Agreeing to this decree, all those aspiring for officers' rank would have to begin their service as non-commissioned officers. By doing this, Kosagovskii equalized the positions of *mohajers* and volunteers within the Brigade, and created a strong support for himself among the promoted volunteers, not to mention the introduction of the systematized officer training.

The abolishment of the privileges that *mohajers* used to enjoy hurt their interests and vanity so much that they started to openly express their discontent. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 1895 the *mohajers* left the Brigade and took their hereditary pensions with them. As a result of this mutiny the Brigade faced a real danger of

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<sup>82</sup>Kosagovskii V. A., *Ocherk razvitiya Persidskoi Kazachyei Brigady*, 395.

disbandment. The Persian Minister of War took use of the factual dissolution of the Brigade. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of May the same year out a so-called "*Persian Brigade*" was created and manned with the deserters. At the same time the Minister of War started talks with the British military agents on the subject by inviting English instructors to the "*Persian Brigade*". In fact, the very existence of the Persian Cossack Brigade was at stake at the moment.

The situation was even more complicated, when Naib al-Saltane, the Minister of War, made it clear that he was not going to prolong the contract with the Russian mission. At this critical moment Russian embassy, understanding the value of the Brigade, stepped in and addressed the shah directly with the request to stop the abnormal state of affairs in the Brigade. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, 1895 in accordance with the Shah's orders, the "*Persian Brigade*" was abolished<sup>83</sup>.

The crisis made clear to Kosagovskii on what weak grounds the foundations of the Brigade were based. To prevent any similar incidents in the future, Kosagovskii decided to enhance the rights of the commander of the Brigade and at the same time to establish strict control over the unit committed to his trust. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, 1895 Kosagovskii presented his "Regulations" to Nasr al-Din. According to one of the articles of the "Regulations", the Persian government was obliged to invite only Russian instructors to the Brigade. The Shah approved all the articles of the "Regulations" without amendments, what played a decisive role in the strengthening of the position of Russian officers within the Brigade. The acceptance of the "Regulations" made impossible for the German or British to take control over the Brigade. At the same time, it greatly added to the authorities of the head of the Brigade, what objectively was a step on the way to turning the Brigade into an

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<sup>83</sup> RGVIA. F. 446. D. 47. 7.



effective tool of Russian Imperial politics. Such was the goal and aspiration of colonel Kosagovskii, and who often took initiative.

The first serious test that gave the Brigade the chance to write its name in the history of Iran was the assassination of Nasr al-Din shah that happened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 1896 by the hands of a panislamist Reza Kermani. The country was plunged into chaos, different groups started struggling for the power. The dead shah was almost forgotten<sup>84</sup>. The police could not deal with the situation, the army was also unreliable. The grand vizier Amin al-Soltan, who was in a good relationship with Kosagovskii, allowed the colonel to act “in accordance with his astuteness and wisdom” for the sake of keeping order in the capital.

The Brigade, swiftly mobilized by Kosagovskii, took control over Tehran. The Cossacks, however, likewise became affected by the intrigues of struggle for the throne of Persia. Naib al-Saltane, son of the late shah, the minister of War and opponent of the Brigade, intended to take the throne instead of the lawful heir prince Mozaffar al-Din, who resided in Tabriz at the time. Kosagovskii, supported by both Russian and British sides, claimed that only Mozaffar al-Din had the right to the throne. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, 1896 Mozaffar al-Din, escorted by the Cossacks, arrived safely in Tehran to become soon the new shah<sup>85</sup>.

Having demonstrated its influence along the struggling factions at the Persian court, the Brigade also confirmed its potential as a significant instrument of Russian influence in Iran. After the incident the sympathies of a large part of the

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<sup>84</sup> Kosagovskii V. A.. *Iz teheranskogo dnevnika polkovnika Kosagovskogo. [From the Tehran diary of colonel Kosagovskii]*. (Moscow, 1960), 56.

<sup>85</sup> Kazemzadeh , F. *Iranian Relations with Russia and the Soviet Union. A Study of Imperialism*. L., 1968, 352.

population, clergy and the shah were on the sides of the Cossacks that maintained the order. Already on the 1st of March, 1899 Mozaffar al-Din gave Kosagovskii an order to increase the force of the Brigade by another 1000 men, what was served briefly. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 1899 the Shah reviewed 1500 mounted Cossacks on parade.

Carrying out his duties as a military agent of the Russian empire, Kosagovskii often sent units to several provinces of Iran, including the ones bordering Turkey and Afghanistan as strategic for the Russian empire. On this mission Persian officers alongside with Russian instructors and sergeant Cossacks were collecting information and data for their commander.

A Russian loan of 1900 played an immense role in strengthening of the positions of the Brigade. Gradually, as the financial situation in Iran was getting worse, the loan obligations of the Persian government were getting bigger, which led to stoppages in paying pensions and salaries in the offices and in the army. At the same time Russian empire was granted access to the incomes of all the customs of Northern Iran as a guarantee for the loan. The income was shifted to the Russian established Loan and Development Bank. The officers and Cossacks of the Brigade received their pay from the bank, in fact, from a Russian financial institution.

The existence of the Brigade obviously had profits for Iran as well. The ruling circles viewed the Cossacks as a support in case of any unrest. Russia, at the same time competently used the state of affairs and started to give the Brigade more support than in the previous years, seeing it as a tool against any other

foreign influence in Iran as well as against any possible intractability of the Persian government.

By the beginning of the 20th century Persian Cossack Brigade came to be comprehended and used as a tool of Russian imperial politics. The focal point of its usage was in 1908 when the Brigade's forces bombarded the Persian *Majles* (Parliament) to stop the Constitutional revolution. Such a long path to recognition of the potency of the Brigade as a lever of influence was to a great extent caused by the fact that the Brigade represented itself an example of the presence of Russian imperialism outside the actual edges of the Russian empire. The merit, or guilt, of bringing the Brigade into the sphere of Russian imperial politics largely belongs to colonel Kosagovskii, who reanimated the Brigade and tripled its numbers. The following case study of his person through the sources will reveal his worldview on application to Iran and his task, his ideas and the way he implemented them for the sake of the Russian Empire.

## **Chapter 2: Persia Through the Colonel Kosagovskij's Notes.**

Leaving notes and messages about Iran was generally one of the objectives the Russian officers had upon being sent on their mission. The sources we still have are not confined to only dry reports, numbers and descriptions. The men sent to Iran were not just functioning as gears in the machine, but were bright personalities and at times took much interest in the little known and exotic surroundings they encountered.

Until the end of colonel Kosagovskij's service in 1903, the brigade had existed already for 24 years and seen the sequence five general instructors. The colonel left clearly articulated notes, thoughts or reports about what was beyond their basic duties, about the general life of the relatively unknown country, about their perception of it, their feelings and interests. It is interesting, but not surprising, that exactly under his rule the brigade was at one of its peaks.

The materials left by Kosagovskij are a unique source. The officers were of a limited number of Russian people who spent in Iran enough time to get acquainted with the country more than on a surface level, and present their impressions to the readers in their homeland. Along with that, the officers were representing the official power of the Russian empire, they were to be in line with the imperial politics and were supposed to help Russian interests in the region to be reached.

In the case of Kosagovskij, however, we are happy to have a huge amount (up to 2,000 pages) of written text, in which he imposes no limits to his expression and speaks on a wide range of topics. The materials and the topic provide a promising soil to be studied through the prism of Orientalist paradigm. The officers,

by leaving notes and accounts about Persia, are in this or another way studying the country; following Edward Said's definition of Orientalism, they are "dealing with Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it". But the decision about whether they were classic orientalists in Said's understanding, whether they were "ruling over it" and presenting a "Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient"<sup>86</sup> remains until deeper analysis of the sources. The answer to this question can bring more clarity to understanding their motives and motives of the Russian state. To get a better look at those sources, an attempt was made to sort the officers' notes into several groups depending on their topic.

### **§1. Climate and natural environment**

The first thing that was catching the eye of the Russian officers upon coming to the country was a landscape and environmental features. Having not yet had enough time to get acquainted with the culture, language and customs, simple and accessible things such as nature and buildings made the easiest impression about the country. The sources on this topic hold information about how exactly was the country perceived.

The usual road that Russian officers used to take on their way to Iran was by the Caspian Sea, from Baku to Anzali on the Persian coast. It is no wonder, then, that many of the first impressions the officers had were connected to this humid subtropical region.

The accounts by Kosagovkij pay attention to the richness of the flora around the city of Anzali upon his arrival. Kosagovskij says that the vegetation was just

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<sup>86</sup> Said, Edward. *"Orientalism"* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 2-3.

magnificent, mentioning also the richness of the animal world which hardly leaves one wishing for more. At the same time we find peculiar notes in Kosagovskij's text. Despite the beauty of the nature, he says, even in the best time of the year there is a rotten smell in the air, and swamp miasmas spread through the land<sup>87</sup>.

**Foliage is luxurious and thick, but among all that some suffocation reigns the land, some chilly, underground dampness; fever, it seems, just hangs in the air<sup>88</sup>.**

It is about this time (1890's), that the first bacterias causing illnesses are being discovered in Europe. Kosagovskij, however, sticks to the old-fashioned concepts of fevers caused by miasmas from swamp air. Kosagovskij goes on further by directly connecting the characteristics of the people to the unchangeable climate of the land. Locals in his description are feeble, yellow-skinned, devastated, with big bellies and thin limbs<sup>89</sup>. Kosagovskij straightforwardly applies stereotypes in his judgment. The people are like this because of the nature, and it thus it cannot be helped or changed. The colonel does not try to look deeper into this and connect the poor state of the local population, for instance, to the lack of effort of the Persian government. He even very well contradicts himself when later he says about the women of the same region that they are extremely beautiful and lively<sup>90</sup>. Thus, the thinking of Kosogovskij here falls in line with the primitive Western colonist/imperialist understanding of the aborigines: those people are predetermined by the nature they live in, and thus, hardly anything can be done to change their condition.

<sup>87</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591 (128 ). 83.

<sup>88</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591 (128 ), 85

<sup>89</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159 ), 103.

<sup>90</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159 ), 139.

The house provided for the lodging also received negative characteristic: it was in “generally stupid Persian design”<sup>91</sup>, which means a building closed from the outside with the rooms leading right into the inner yard. This is a traditional type of a house in Iran, connected with many aspects of the local culture, one of which is the secludedness of the inner life of the family from the outside world. This type of a building can be seen in most of the cities until nowadays; Kosagovskij, however, calls it “stupid” just because it does not really match his understanding of how a house should look like. He does not go into details about how and why are the houses built exactly in this manner, although there obviously are cultural and climatic reasons for that. All that Kosogovskij does is measuring things in comparison to his own cultural standards, and when the realities do not match the mentioned standards, they most of the times get criticized. Kosagovskij does not show a desire to go away from an exclusively Russian – or Western – standpoint when talking about the Eastern country; an approach which very well might be called Orientalist.

In the very first voyages to Persia Kosagovskij starts to call the locals with a peculiar word “persiuk”.

**On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August (1892 – P.B.) I was making a report about the Persiuks’ assault at a border strip in the Mugan steppe<sup>92</sup>.**

I could not find the analogous word in any of the publications of the time, neither is it easy to tell whether this word was in wide use before Kosagovskij; in any case, one can say for certain that it is not used nowadays. The etymology and the build-up, however, clearly show that the word had an offensive and humiliating meaning in the mouth of a Russian. The parallels here can be drawn between *persiuk* for a

<sup>91</sup> RGVIA f. 76, op. 1, d. 591 (128 ), 90.

<sup>92</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591 (128 ), 74.

Persian and *zhid* for a Jew. The suffix *-iuk* is also used in a number of swear words. Thus, the Russian officer initially comes from the position of his undoubted superiority over the local people.

Kosagovskij makes also some generalizations about the Persians' national character, which like a red thread will pervade all of his notes. It is interesting to see how intermingled are the concepts of religion and ethnicity. "Jealous as a Turk, sly as a Persian", he brings up a proverb of an unknown origin, and he adds further on: a Shiite Persian is conservative and mercantile, whereas a Sunnite Turk is noble-minded<sup>93</sup>. The next sentence brings it even further on, as the ethnical term is not even mentioned: "As for refinement of cruelty, torments and guile, even here the Shiite beat the Sunnite"<sup>94</sup>. One wonders how much were the Persians identified with the religion and vice versa, especially at the time when the concept of the so-called "racial religions" was in fashion, which, among all, said that the Shiite faith was an exclusive invention of the Persians, a response to the Arab Sunni Islam. Also, a big number of Azerbaijani Turks were and still are Shiite; one is left to wonder whether it caused confusion in the Russian officers' mind. This once again shows that in the judgment a set of stereotypes was implemented.

Characterizing the Persians, Kosagovskij writes that "The insolence of Persians grows according to one's pliability and toadying; Persians instinctively feel whom they are dealing with just like children and animals"<sup>95</sup>. The next sentence brings to mind the statement about the climate. The Persians, he says, are quick to blaze up and just as quick to calm down, similar to that the day in Iran is hot, and the night is icy. "Maybe the climate plays its role in that the Persians, while developing very

<sup>93</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 112.

<sup>94</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 113.

<sup>95</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 121.



fast, are very fast to get old, too”<sup>96</sup>. Kosagovskij, thus, tends to see the nature of the country and its climate inseparable from the nature of its people, their behavior, and their physical condition, even, to some extent, their religion. Thus, little can be done to help the country and the locals internally. Drawing on with this thought and bearing in mind the suggestions for the spread of Russian influence that Kosagovskij brings up, one can see that from this point of view an intervention from the outside would bring only good changes. The sources confirm that Kosagovskij was following this way of thinking – at least his suggestions on what roads the Russian army should use in case of an intervention do.

## **§ 2. The Status of Women**

One of the most extensive topics on which Kosagovskij talks are women. On the one hand, the interest in the women’s position in the East was always present not only in Russia, and continues to be so until the present day. Understanding the position of women is often times the key to understanding the culture. On the other hand, it is interesting to mention, such a stress on women is natural for Kosagovskij as a person, as, reading his diary, even before his mission in Iran, when he was serving in the Caucasus, one remarks that almost every day he pictures one or several women<sup>97</sup>.

The discrimination of women is of course very much in the place as the officers’ notes depict it. Women are preferred workers on many of the local fabrics, but it happens not because of their growing emancipation, but rather because female labour is valued much less in comparison to the male one, and thus is much more

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<sup>96</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 122.

<sup>97</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591 (128 ), 51-63.

profitable<sup>98</sup>. The numbers provided by Kosagovskij say that men in the silk fabrics in Gilan are paid from 30 to 60 silver coins a month, while women get 10 only as an average<sup>99</sup>. A man, to be respectful, should always express loathing for everything connected with women<sup>100</sup>. Kosagovskij mentions one of the Persians saying to his peer that

**If you want an advice about something important, ask your confessor, another mullah, friend, in the end, the first man you meet – and only if you do not find anyone, ask your wife for an advice and then do the contrary<sup>101</sup>.**

Kosagovskij draws parallels with the Chinese and the Persians in the way they treat their women. Jealousy and fear for their privileged position among men are present at the both poles of Asia. The Chinese, however, says Kosagovskij, are more prosaic and harsh, for example, in order to prevent a woman from running away, they were crippling her feet. Muslims to him are more poetic and soft. This is why they did not dare to harm the beauty of women, but rather were putting them under the watch of men, who were crippled themselves by castration, thus any possibility of intercourse was blocked<sup>102</sup>.

Bringing up the comparison with China, Kosagovskij does not go further than that. There are no parallels drawn to the position of a woman in the West – apparently because to Kosogovskij, Eastern and Western women are incomparable values. The subject stays within the realm of the Orient. Persian women, despite all the sympathy of the author, remain on the other side of the civilizational and cultural divide – alongside with the Chinese.

<sup>98</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159), 2.

<sup>99</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159), 4.

<sup>100</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226), 177.

<sup>101</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226), 176.

<sup>102</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226), 180.

Any awakening of the self-consciousness from the side of women, according to Kosagovskij, is immediately being suppressed by men, and this is a life-and-death struggle<sup>103</sup>. Equality between sexes does not seem to be a topic in Iran. There are more chances to expect an outburst from a city woman than from the one from the countryside, but even in this case it can be expected that a man will be ready to commit crimes to stop it in the bud. According to the perception of Kosagovskij, the Islamic law in its spirit allows such crimes to happen<sup>104</sup>. This just adds up to the Kosogovskij's apparent opinion of the unchangeability of the Persian system from within.

It is necessary to remark that sharia' in its essence does not allow unlimited domestic abuse towards women. It is not prohibited to beat one's wife from time to time, but not hard and only with "educational" purposes. The wife, on the other hand, has the right to demand conditions not worse than the ones she had in her father's house, she can have personal property and even conduct business through intermediaries<sup>105</sup>. If these conditions are not met, she has a right to divorce. My conclusion out of it is that Kosagovskij tends to make overgeneralizations about the about the Islamic law. He partly corrects himself, however, by saying that even if the law did not allow that, the Islamic way of life, total absence of police and medical control allow this, and, as a consequence, are de-facto legalized.

The peculiar treatment of women in some regions, as it appears from the officers' notes, is partly caused by another factor. As it follows from Kosagovskij's papers, many men in the Caspian region are very cold in relationship with women,

<sup>103</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 168.

<sup>104</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 180.

<sup>105</sup> Petrushevskii I. P., *Islam v Irane.[Islam in Iran]* (Leningrad: LGU Publishment, 1966), 175-177.

and even a considerable part of them are impotent<sup>106</sup>. Women, on the other hand, are very temperamental and prone to sexual intercourse. Something similar was happening in the Kirghiz and Turkmen tribes, where a man had to prove his abilities in front of the elders, when had a complaint from his wife had been presented to them<sup>107</sup>. It makes one wonder where a Russian officer could get such information from, but it certainly had to be a reason for a tension.

Upon describing women in Gilan and Mazandaran, Kosagovskij comes into a contradiction with himself. As he said, the sick climate was taking its toll on the local populations, and was the reason the men were often shabby-looking and impotent<sup>108</sup>. Following this logic, how could be women living in the same regions be so much healthier, better looking and sexually active than men? Even if it was exactly as described – highly doubtful – the explanation of the climatic determination is clearly not valid. Rather, it shows the level of bias and prejudice Kosagovskij had against the locals. The description of women in a better light can be explained by Kosagovskij's sympathy to them. But even here, despite that it is hard to prove, his account on the supposed female hypersexuality bears resemblance to 19<sup>th</sup> century Western myth about the Oriental women's great sexual appetite that they could hardly satisfy in the harems. Also, such a description could be caused by the Persian men, as in Persia, similar to medieval Europe, it was common to think that women have controlled sexuality. Sometimes women were the ones convicted for rape, as "luring" a man into it.

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<sup>106</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159, 105.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

Women were not totally suppressed as wives, Kosagovskij suggests. Apart from many reports about how tough can a wife be at home, Kosagovskij mentions the words of a Persian who tasted a riverful of a marriage with a Shah's daughter:

**People say that wife is a slave to her husband; well, and I will add that my wife is not just a slave, but she is also holding me and my family as slaves, she is a personified guile indeed<sup>109</sup>.**

An interesting and underresearched insight into women's history in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran is presented by mentioning a book called *Korsun Nana*<sup>110</sup>. The book is devoted to "what women are obliged to do and how they are obliged to talk"<sup>111</sup>. The book is written by five women, which in itself is an amazing fact for the time. Kosagovskij brings up short translations, and generally mentions the chapter names, out of which I can mention the following: *Namaz*. Fasting. Marriage. Giving birth. Baths. Music. Duties. *Mahram* and *Namahram* (what is allowed and what is not). Treats and guests<sup>112</sup>.

An entertaining and telling picture is the description of the visit the wife of a Belgian supervisor of the local customs in Kermanshah had in 1900. The European lady was visited by wives of local aristocrats while the Belgian was out of the house; when he came back, to his astonishment he saw that his wife was almost naked and about to put her clothes on again. It appeared that local ladies, curious to know all the secrets of the *ferengi* (European) dress, had stripped the European naked when she could not expect that. Kosagovskij gives it as an example of the naïve and somewhat childish perception the locals had towards the foreigners<sup>113</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 44.

<sup>110</sup> The exact title and meaning of it is difficult to tell due to the peculiar way of transliterating of Persian words into Russian Kosagovskij used.

<sup>111</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 88.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395 (226 ), 191.

The diaries and notes show that the cololel Kosagovskij is in general sympathetic to Persian women. The interest he has in them spurs him on to produce a vast amount of information which is valuable until nowadays if we want to learn more about the position of women in old Persia. In his judgment and description Kosagovskij still holds on to a rather Orientalist prejudices that sometimes are visible even through a veil of sympathy.

### **§3. Public Health and Hygiene**

Connected to this topic, and somewhat a continuation of it is the issue of public health. Kosagovskij, due to his work mostly in Tehran and Northern Iran, and due to Russia's bigger involvement in this region compared to the South, left a considerable amount of notes on the subject for the regions of Gilan and Mazanderan. According to him, in the city of Rasht almost all men and women were ill with a rash, and some with leprosy<sup>114</sup>. The rate of sexually transmitted diseases was incredibly high, with, as mentioned, no medical help. Kosagovskij lists two main reasons which contribute to such a high spread of STD: Muslim insularity and, secondly, "almost general sexual dissoluteness among women"<sup>115</sup>. Then there is a continued talk on the bad climate and the following miserable look of local men.

This, however, goes into a clear contradiction with what Kosagovskij says later, as the local Gilani women in his description are mostly very beautiful with dim white skin<sup>116</sup>. This obviously has to do with the man's prejudgment.

However, the spread of the diseases due to the absence of doctors cannot be denied. In this sense the reactions by the Russian military doctors are revealing:

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<sup>114</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159 ), 120.

<sup>115</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159 ), 122.

<sup>116</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159 ), 124.

after Russian hospital barracks had been set up on the southern shore of the Caspian, there started to be a significant flow of local population towards the Russian doctors<sup>117</sup>. In the absence of them, most women concerned with STD had to consult various sorceresses, who, as Kosagovskij puts it, had usually gone through the same problems themselves, and therefore at times could offer a satisfactory level of curing<sup>118</sup>.

The problems of public health and hygiene do not end with the deficiency of hospitals, or, rather, their non-existence. Colonel Kosagovskij, having received an outstanding level of training in engineering as an officer, pays a good deal of attention to the issues of water supply and sewerage. Among his notes there is a full and well-prepared article on the topic, including a description of the many ways the water is stored and transmitted in Iran, all of it with drawings and precise charts. A big part of it is devoted to the strategy and inspired by clear military reasons: how to organize water supply of a Russian army, in case it would fight in these lands<sup>119</sup>. There is a good deal of criticism as well. For instance, describing the three means of how water gets into houses in Persia: wells, ditches and *qanats* (underground canals) Kosagovskij mentions that in case of open canals no one stops to throw in there whatever he wants, *qanats* sometimes pass under the cemeteries. To make water at least a bit cleaner, the rich ones can allow themselves to have reservoirs for residue, everyone else has to drink it as it is<sup>120</sup>. *Qanats* and wells require a good deal of work to be maintained and regularly cleaned, there existed a special profession for that, and reluctance of the owners to call those people could lead to

<sup>117</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159), 127.

<sup>118</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159), 128, 129.

<sup>119</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159), 81.

<sup>120</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371 (159), 28.

catastrophic consequences. To illustrate that, and also greediness and slyness of the locals, Kosagovskij mentions the following story:

***Mughannas* (cleaners), wishing to get tips from *sayyid* Fazlallah, and knowing that he would rather strangle himself than pay for the cleaning of his own property, threw a big dog into his well; the dog was poisoned by police strychnine for a good count. The dog had been rotting in the well for a whole month, and the *sayyid* still kept on selling and drinking this water. In the end the water turned a red-yellowish colour, thick, slimy and acquired a corpse taste as the dog was rotting, but the *sayyid* kept on drinking. Luckily for his neighbours, his well was not connected to anyone else's, and the *sayyid* himself led a lonely life and did not even have servants, or else he could have poisoned a lot of people. After all that, the *sayyid* got bedridden, but still was trying to find a *mirab* (watering official) to make an investigation and clean the well for the governmental money, as he did not want to give a coin of his own. A *mirab* could not be found, however, and the situation worsened to the extent the *sayyid* finally agreed to pay for the cleaning himself<sup>121</sup>.**

The sewerage does not stay free from criticism, either; according to Kosagovskij, there was no such thing as sewerage in the European sense in Persia. Instead, there are the so-called *zir-ab*, underground canals which lead to a deep vertical underground well made several metres away from the house<sup>122</sup>. Such a reservoir, depending on its size and branches can suck sewage for 10-15 years. The Persians, thus, instead of taking sewage out of the city, let the diseases be sucked into the ground right at the place, which makes no wonder that illnesses in Tehran were very widespread because of the density of the houses<sup>123</sup>. Despite all that, says Kosagovskij, the government “treats this issue jauntily and does not go deep into the current situation and urgent needs of its capital”<sup>124</sup>.

This section of the information Kosagovskij gives might be the most unbiased one, since the Colonel talks about technical features that he's a specialist in, and

<sup>121</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 35-37.

<sup>122</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 40.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 43.



issues such as people and culture are mostly left aside. The charts and drawings are numerous and accurate – unfortunately it is impossible to add them to the thesis due to the archival restrictions. In the article drafts that Kosagovskij left, however, often times we can see the motivation that led the officer to writing them. The impetus is to promote the Russian interest, this is why when speaking about the roads, Kosagovskij remarks through which ones could the Russian army march, and when talking about the irrigation he bears in mind how different watering systems could be used for the needs of the Russian military. Thus, even when doing a relatively independent research, Kosagovskij stays within Russian imperial paradigm.

## **§5. Government and International relations**

In the course of time the Russian officers got to learn how much in the country dependent on the will or caprice of the Shah. The creation of the Brigade itself can be counted as one of those momentary ideas; there was hardly any urgent need for it, as the Austrian officers were simultaneously invited to reorganize the army. Colonel Kosagovskij takes this impression even further by saying that “the state here equals the Shah, in the very sense as Louis XIV said, I am the state”<sup>125</sup>. This is a significant notice. In all the conflicts the brigade took part, it had always supported the shah, as if sharing this conviction itself. This happened even when the majority was against him, as in the time of the Constitutional revolution. The shah, indeed, was powerful in Tehran, where everything until a certain point obeyed his will, but he most certainly did not enjoy unlimited power in all of the country, especially in the far corners of it, where other local and tribal forces were strong. Support of the Shah looks like a possibility of having a reliable tool of influence. In

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<sup>125</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378 (503), 12.

the case of Kosagovskij, however, the statement he made is rather caused by the limitation his scope had, as he could hardly have more details about the southern part of the country.

Generally, there is little respect seen to the highest officials of the Persian court. Kosagovskij speaks about Anis ad-Dowle, the senior wife of Naser ad-Din, who had to check in the morning all *dast-e khatts* (decrees), written by her spouse, so as not to miss anything written when her husband was drunk<sup>126</sup>. Kawam ad-Dowle, the Minister of Finance, is claimed to be taking this place only because he was the one to pay the largest bribe for it<sup>127</sup>. Concerning him the following story is told: on a ball an Armenian princess was behaving so nicely with him, that he got the impression she was in love with him. The same night a servant was sent to the princess's house with an invitation to share Kawam's bed. The furious princess told her husband to kill the insolent fellow; and when Naser al-Din Shah heard about the case, he promised to solve it by himself. In the end, the Shah hit his minister several times with his walking stick and took a fine, 2000 tumans, which, however, was left for the Shah<sup>128</sup>.

The court officials could also act on their own account even in regard of those who were not under their direct control. In 1903 Mozaffar al-Din Shah was going to Russia through Astara accompanied by the Cossack orchestra from the Brigade. Upon meeting the Russian representative it appeared that Moshir ol-Dowle, the Foreign Minister, told the *Kapellmeister* not to play "God Save the Tsar", but play neutral music instead, with the purpose of diminishing the importance of the

<sup>126</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378.309.

<sup>127</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378.315.

<sup>128</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 395.150.

Russian representative in the eyes of both Russian and Persian Muslims residing at the border<sup>129</sup>.

The perception of Russians and Russia in Iran was not uniform and simple. The previous example shows one side of it; on the other hand, the *mohajers*<sup>130</sup> in the Brigade openly expressed to Kosagovskij that if a conflict happens between Russia and Britain, they will “give their body and soul for the possibility to come back to Russia as notables”<sup>131</sup>. Ogorodnikov, a member of the Russian Geographic Society, mentions that in 1874 many of the people he met in Mashhad (Khorasan, North-Eastern Iran) were spitting in anger by the name of the Shah, and openly stated their wish to see Russia taking over their land. This, they thought, would put an end to the Turkmen pillaging the region<sup>132</sup>.

The officials, however, were not so easy to deal with as some of the locals, and the notes left by Kosagovskij rather confirm the statement made by Mohammad R. Ghods— that Persia and the shah in particular based its position on the competition between the two great powers, Russia and England, not giving preference to any, knowing where it might lead<sup>133</sup>. This is illustrated by the case of constructing a sea port in Anzali on the Caspian shore and the Anzali-Tehran road. The project was offered by the Russian side<sup>134</sup>, and, on a first glance, was a wonderful opportunity for the Persian government to modernize the important port on the Caspian sea and connect it to the capital by a safe and fast road. The Persian side, however, by delaying the project and interfering with it, by all means, seemed to have shown a

<sup>129</sup> RG VIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217. 289.

<sup>130</sup> the Muslim population of Caucasus resettled in Iran after the Caucasian War.

<sup>131</sup> RG VIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217. 221.

<sup>132</sup> Ogorodnikov P. I. *Strana Solntsa: Persiya (Putevyye ocherki). [The land of the sun: Persia (Traveller's sketches)]* (Saint Petersburg: V. Demakov publ., 1881), 166.

<sup>133</sup> Ghods Muhammad Reza. *Iran in the Twentieth Century: A Political History* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), 127.

<sup>134</sup> RG VIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378. 410.

full lack of understanding of the project's benefits – this was the way the Russian press had viewed it. What is left out of the picture is the fact that in the light of previous agreements Persia was not allowed to have a fleet in the Caspian, thus, the port could not be used. As follows from the notes left by Kosagovskij, “Persians understand the meaning of this [Anzali-Tehran] road maybe even better than Europeans do”<sup>135</sup>. According to Kosagovskij, this topic was a matter of debates at the court of Naser al-Din Shah, and a concise decision was made – prevent building at all costs. “The Persians will never allow constructing the road which would give the Russians direct access to the heart of the country. Even if such a road was built, the Persians would even go for sabotage”<sup>136</sup>.

This section of the notes shows how well was the Russian officer informed about the structure of the Persian government, how deep, in fact, did he go into the question of internal and external relations of the Persian state. Kosagovskij pays a lot of attention to how Russia and the Russians are perceived within Persia, what it takes to deal with the Persian court officials. All this, of course, is not done just out of plain curiosity, but is a useful information for the Russian government and possibly the General Staff. It is hard to define, however, how much of this information was collected because of the officer's instruction and how much was just the Colonel's enthusiasm in doing his job. Apparently the enthusiasm did play a very important role in this, as none of the previous officers on the position of Kosagovskij left a somewhat comparable amount of information on the topic.

## §6. Conclusion

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<sup>135</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 414.

<sup>136</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 415.

The notes, reports and diaries left by colonel Kosagovskij allow to deduce the view he had on Iran, its people and its state system. The notes generally provide rather full and comprehensive information on the topics they are dealing with. At times, this information is simply unique, especially on the topics which were considered dull and unimportant in traditional Persian historiography, such as health care of the common folk and sewerage. The comparison of data given in the archival materials with other published literature at the time does not allow speaking about open mistakes and misinterpretations.

In all of the notes researched, however, there is a constant spirit of superiority present. The materials in the fund of Kosagovskij are manuscripts for the private use, and the plans to publish some of the articles never came to fruition. Kosagovskij in his notes behaves and views local people and customs in the spirit of almost stereotypical Orientalism. There is a topic which goes like a red thread through the materials of the officer, which is the spread of Russia's influence in the region and serving Russian interests rather than Persian ones. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

### Chapter 3: Kosagovskii's vision of Russian politics in Persia.

The previous chapter gives a picture of how Kosagovskii perceived the country, he was working on, its people and its culture. He can very well be called an Orientalist in his perception, even not bearing in mind that he is a Russian officer on duty. Given that fact, one could already make presuppositions about how Kosagovskii viewed Persian Cossack Brigade's and, generally, Russian mission in Iran. I dare say the suppositions would not go very far from the actual truth.

The Persian Cossack Brigade started as a small, largely ceremonial unit designed to be the Shah's guard in 1879. Yet, by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, it became to be regarded as a hearth of reaction within the Persian state and the Shah's and Russia's most reliable weapon against the constitutionalists<sup>137</sup>. Focusing on the last aspect, the Brigade began to be explicitly used as a tool of Russian foreign politics in Iran, with the head of the Brigade following the commands from the side of the Persians only in case they did not interfere with the Russian interests<sup>138</sup>. Something and someone stood behind this transition, and my claim is that colonel Kosagovskii made a great contribution to this process.

To support my argument, I will refer to the sources left by Kosagovskii once again. What were the officer's aspirations? Did he remain a passive observing Orientalist in his worldview, or did he actively help the spread of Russian

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<sup>137</sup> Cronin, Stephanie. *Deserters, Convicts, Cossacks. In: Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions Since 1800*. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 164; 21. Browne E.G. *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*. (L.,1910), 202.

<sup>138</sup> Atkin, Muriel. *Russia and Iran, 1780-1828*. (Minnesota: Univ Of Minnesota Press; 1980), 333.

imperialism? If he wanted the Russian case to win, how did he view this process? The notes left by colonel Kosagovskii give an explicit answer to those questions.

The sources reveal Kosagovskii's thoughts on the peculiarities of the position of the Cossack Brigade in the Persian realities. Within the Persian military system in terms of subordination Kosagovskii during the 1906-1903 was subject to the grand vizier. Despite the strict chain of subordination, says Kosagovskii, during the whole term of his service he experienced continuous obstinate and unceremonious attempts to seize control over the Russian instructors that the Persian Minister of War had done. One of the most events that questioned the existence of the Brigade itself was the demarche that the *mohajers* took in 1895. As mentioned in chapter 1, when the *mohajers* left the Cossack Brigade, the Persian Minister of War (name put here) attempted to make a new Persian Brigade out of them and disband the Russian mission altogether.

The reasons for the crisis lie in the abolishment of the privileges that *mohajers* enjoyed until in 1895 Kosagovskii issued a decree which put the *mohajer's* rank on the level with common volunteers within the Brigade. Kosagovskii talks about the reasons for such a reckless and potentially dangerous move in the notes. The colonel gives characterizes the composition of the Brigade in the following way: *mohajers* are disobedient, but loyal, "if you know their soul, you can keep them in your hands"<sup>139</sup>. The volunteers, at the same time, are easier to deal with, but are unstable and less reliable: they are trimming their sails to the wind (which is why they came to the Briigade in the first place) and will most likely turn to wherever it's more advantageous for them. Under Domontovich the Brigade was manned by the *mohajers*, which Kosagovskii refers to as the "golden age", and

<sup>139</sup> RG VIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 403.

at the time of Schneur, when the emphasis was made on the volunteers, the Brigade was clearly in the state of decline.

In his writings Kosagovskii several times stresses the importance of the *mohajers* for the Brigade and for the Russian cause in Iran. As Kosagovskii puts it, *mohajers*, originating from the Transcaucasia, were to a large extent disappointed by the Persian government and homesick<sup>140</sup>. Many of them claimed to Kosagovskii that in the case of war between Russia and Britain, they are willing to serve Saint Petersburg. He characterizes them as people well familiar with the localities, good translators and guides, “in short – a treasure for Russia”<sup>141</sup>. Why, then, would the officer who valued the group so much and recognized their utmost importance for the Brigade, do something that will repel them to the extent of leaving? The answer is that Kosagovskii wanted total and utmost subordination within the whole Brigade.

In general, the structure of the Brigade was working better than it would be in the Persian army. The head of the Brigade was obeyed implicitly and absolutely, to the extent that a very tough treatment from his side would be received without complaints. The subordination to the other Russian and Persian officers, writes Kosagovskii, was very relative, and at times not even acknowledged. The only exception was when the Persian officers happened to be the clan leaders having their fellow tribesmen in command. Such a custom was especially in use among the *mohajers*. This created a double hierarchical chain within the Brigade, which was intolerable for Kosagovskii and he decided to get rid of the clan system within the Brigade and the privileged position the clan leaders used to enjoy. The situation when the Persian soldiers would openly question the authority of the Russian

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<sup>140</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 378, 403.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



officers and obey the Persians instead would make any use of the Brigade in the Russian foreign politics impossible. Even before explicit plans for such a use were put into life, Kosagovskii understood the problem and started taking action. He himself mentions four ways of how he dealt with the clan leaders' privileges:

1. By expelling some under a plausible excuse.
2. By giving them positions less connected with power.
3. By breaking up the units that consisted of the people compatriot with their officers, thus separating the chiefs from their subordinates.
4. By mixing in the regiments people of different nationalities and origin: townsmen with village dwellers and nomads, Turks with Persians...<sup>142</sup>

Thus, Kosagovskii was aimed at establishing full control within the Brigade. The state of affairs before Kosagovskii's arrival in Tehran was apparently good enough for the Brigade's functioning as a ceremonial unit. Still, it was not good enough for the unit to be an obedient tool in the hands of its commander at all levels. The restructurization provoked inevitable unrest from the side of the *mohajers*, that the Minister of War and British representative tried to use, having understood the potential of the Brigade. The unrest, however, was handled by the Russian government's direct appeal to the Mozaffar al-Din Shah, which shows that Saint Petersburg started to value the Brigade, too.

Kosagovskii understood the importance of ensuring the freedom of actions of the Russian officers not just within, but also from the outside of the Brigade. The matter concerns the place the head of the Russian mission had within the system of the Persian military. During the nine years of his service in Iran, Kosagovskii tried to

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<sup>142</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217, 265.

ensure maximal independence for himself and the Brigade from the will of the Persian government. The “Regulations” signed by the Shah in 1895 enhanced the Brigade commander’s authorities and made him less dependent on the Minister of War. The Russian loan of 1900 made the Brigade financially self-sufficient. One can see the logic behind this chain of actions: Kosagovskii was going to turn the Cossacks into a unit under a total Russian control, which would own allegiance to the Shah just nominally.

The personal contribution that Kosagovskii made to this process can be evaluated with the results of his follower, colonel Chernozubov. Chernozubov had apparently loosened the grip, and the new grand vizier managed to achieve indirect subordination of the head of the Brigade to his 25-year old nephew Amin-khan. This Amin-khan was a son of the Minister of War Sepahsalar, brother of the grand vizier – this is to add to the nepotism in the Persian government. Such a line of subordination was humiliating, and Kosagovskii in his notes describes the situation basically as “the end”.<sup>143</sup>

By the end of the 1903 partly as a result of pressure by Kosagovskii, all the foreign military advisors except the Russians had left Persia. In 1904, however, after Kosagovskii left, the Persian government, pushed by the British representatives, invited six Austrian officers, who started to compete with the unit under the command of Chernozbov. The Russian ambassador planned to raise protests and even threaten with bringing a Russian regiment to Khorasan. After some talks with the grand vizier the fact of the presence of the Austrian officers seemed to be reconciled with.

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<sup>143</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 252, 37.

After some time the talks on the usefulness of the Brigade for Persia continued. The reports of Chernozubov state that the Persian Ministry of War complained about lack of funds for the maintenance of the Brigade. Apparently the Brigade started its descent, and there was a rising desire among the Persian officials to finish with the Russian rule in it. Kosagovskij, having retired from his position in Iran, did not lose interest in the problem of the Cossacks. In his notes he contemplates on the reasons for the uncertain position of the Brigade in the Persian state.

As Kosagovskii puts it, money talks are merely an excuse. Numerous used the Shah's trust to get the money for their projects through the European loans, and, as soon as they ran out of money, they were replaced by other adventurers and minions. The problem with the Brigade, Kosagovskii thinks, is not in the lack of money. He suggests putting an emphasis on making the Cossacks "absolutely necessary" for the Persian government, as it was before 1903<sup>144</sup>. Before this date the top of the Persian establishment valued the Brigade and would often send it out to handle unrests like tobacco riots after 1891 or the ones after the death of Nasr al-Din Shah in 1896. Kosagovskii claims that by their actions after 1903 the Shah and his close ones simply stress how useless the Brigade is for them. The suggestion of Kosagovskii makes sense, because otherwise the Brigade would become viewed as an expensive toy, as it already happened in the previous years.

Kosagovskii finds it essential to always stress the Russianness of the Brigade and its officers. "All the meaning of the instructors lies in the fact that they are Russian, not Persian".<sup>145</sup> The Shah, says Kosagovskii, who had served under

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<sup>144</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 252, 40.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

him for 7 years, is weak-willed, and fully under the influence of his ex-mentor prince Atabeg Ain al-Dowle.<sup>146</sup> The prince, in turn, values any Persian officer next to nothing, and the only way to make him listen is to stress that there is the Russian government behind any claims that a Brigade officer makes. This line of action would affect the Shah as well. It also demonstrates the way in which, according to Kosagovskii, the Brigade should be viewed and presented: it is openly Russian, and the actions and claims that the Brigade takes come from Russia, and are done presumably – and plainly – for the Russian interest.

Thus, after being sent off and seeing the decline the Brigade started to fall into, Kosagovskii gets clearly worried about the inconsistency of the Russian actions in Iran. In one of the letters he openly raises a question: “what the Persian Cossack Brigade is for Russia, what do we demand of our instructors and what do we expect from them? Only by clearing up these questions, we can grasp out the current situation in Persia. Only after that can we make strictly defined demands for our instructors.”<sup>147</sup> Kosagovskii calls for a strategy of Russian actions in Persia, which at the moment was not openly present. Kosagovskii, however, had the strategy in his head.

The archive hosts a document entitled “Memorable note (Pamyatnaya Zapiska) of the retired lieutenant general Kosagovskii”, written in 1906. In it the officer dilates upon the state of affairs of the Russian military in Iran, and in his evaluation it is “in a very difficult condition”<sup>148</sup>. He then gives a list of reasons for such an evaluation:

1. Absence of agents with good knowledge of the country.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>147</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 252, 55.

<sup>148</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 321, 2.

2. Absence of any system in the actions of the Russian officers and coordination between them. Russian head of the cavalry (Cossacks) in Tehran has no relation to the Russian officers in Astrabad, Khorasan, Gilan and so on. Reports from the same places on the same subjects go separately to the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia. Compared to that, the English and the Germans have a complete and unified system of actions and reports.

This remark once again proves the way in which Kosagovskii perceived the Brigade: it was not – or should not be – a Persian unit trained by the Russian officers, rather – a Russian unit working for the Russian interests and serving for Persia only *volens nolens* as a secondary goal.

3. Inconsistency and vagueness of demands of the heads of the Russian mission in Tehran. There was no unified instruction and every each new head started from scratch, on his own account; he finds out by himself what his predecessor already knew. Compared to that, the English and the Germans followed a systematic line from year to year.
4. Absolute absence of secret service: “it seems like until the very last time no one even suspected the existence of any kind of revolutionary movement in Persia, when at the same time for the last few years there exists “Young Persia”, what I have reported about to the Staff in the Caucasus to no avail”.<sup>149</sup>

Having defined the problems, Kosagovskii does not stop here and attempts to give a few recommendations for the Russian case in Persia. It makes sense to give a direct quote here:

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<sup>149</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 321, 5.

**With the exceptional knowledge of Persia that general Kosagovskii has, with the extensive valuable materials that he collected during his many years of stay in Asia, and especially with all the sympathy that he invariably enjoyed from the side of the late and the present Shah (as he personally assisted his accession to throne – P.B.) – one might think that general Kosagovskii could have at least partially amend what had been spoiled in the recent times. He could have directed the activities of all the Russian officers in Iran in accordance with the orders from Saint Petersburg if they were united under his lead.<sup>150</sup>**

Thus, Kosagovskii had some thoughts in connection with the system of actions Russia should have used in Iran – and this also tells us that such a system did not exist. Kosagovskii, however, did not limit himself with rather vague thoughts and recommendations.

One of the sources in the archive is titled “Draft of the project by V. A. Kosagovskii called “Appointment of the General Staff officers in border and sea-bordering regions in Persia””. In this project sent out to the General Staff in Saint Petersburg in 1905, Kosagovskii asks to be appointed the consul general of Khorasan bordering on the Russian territories. The authorities of such a consul general would include subordination to him of the Head of the Cavalry Training (Cossack Brigade) in Tehran, consul of Kerman and generally of all the consuls of the bordering regions. To the provinces that already have English agents in them, military officers should be appointed as consuls to counterpart the British influence: the same course of actions had already been done in the Asiatic part of Turkey.<sup>151</sup>

Following this course of actions, Kosagovskii formulates the main task of the consul general: to win the struggle with Britain over the influence in Iran.<sup>152</sup> It is important to mention that this document was written before the Russian-British agreement of 1907 when Iran was split on the defined zones of influence, and direct

<sup>150</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 321, 6.

<sup>151</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591, 3.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

rivalry between the two states started to cease, with both of them facing Germany as the new competitor. Besides fighting the British, Kosagovskii of course puts up the task of promoting Russian interests. To do this effectively, consul general, according to Kosagovskii, should possess a number of authorities:

- He should be a direct representative of Russia's interests
- He should be able to engage in direct relations with Russian and foreign merchants and businessmen
- A topographic service should be at hand
- He should be granted free passage on all the roads in Persia<sup>153</sup>

To reach his goal in promoting Russian influence, says Kosagovskii, the consul general will have to fulfill a number of tasks:

- He should appoint a consul into every key city in Persia.
- A training of qualified secret service agents and translators out of the Persians should be set up
- He should win *tajir bashi* (head of all merchants) over to the Russian side. Kosagovskii stresses this point, as, according to him, English ambassador Harding already started working in this direction, and Russian representatives constantly fail to reach the goal "because of their delusion of grandeur".
- A network of free institutions of medical help manned by unselfish Russian staff should be organized<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591, 4.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 5.

The necessary function of the consul general as a military agent would be collecting information, as Kosagovskii had done during his time in the lead of the Brigade. Kosagovskii presented the concept in a more systematic way. According to him, there should be created a categorized network of the characteristics of all the main rulers, military leaders, secular heads, high members of the clergy, as well as of the candidates to all of these positions<sup>155</sup>.

Talking about military agents and secret service, one would inevitably raise a question: who would make up the staff for secret service, intelligence and possibly reconnaissance missions? Kosagovskii's plain answer to this is that Persian Cossack Brigade officers and lower ranks, both Russian and Persian, would make best guides and spies.

To coordinate the actions of the intelligence agents, Kosagovskii suggests, a centralized intelligence bureau should be created with the presence of agents in all the main cities. All of the Russian officers appointed to regions in Persia will be obliged to share their tasks with the agents. To get the program going better, interestingly Kosagovskii urges the General Staff to get the similar programs that the English, the Germans and the Japanese use<sup>156</sup>. Such a request from a high General Staff officer means that Russia did not plan to use or did not use any kind of network of agents in Iran to promote its influence; it is questionable if any coherent plan of promoting Russian influence ever existed, considering at the fluctuation within the Brigade.

Kosagovskii counts several groups of people that could be useful for the Russian government as spies. Besides the Russian officers, he calls for creating a

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<sup>155</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591, 5.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.



network of merchants and commissioners who would collect, transfer and deliver the information – practice widely used by the British as well, enough to remember “Kim” by Kipling. Besides from that, a number of other groups and professions are mentioned: Persian Jews, derwishes, statesmen, prostitutes, servants<sup>157</sup>.

Special emphasis in describing the secret intelligence network to be set is put, obviously, on the Persian Cossack Brigade. Kosagovskii calls for wider use of Persian Cossack officers and lower ranks. In their work, during trips and such, their action should be coordinated with and assisted by Russian-controlled banks and consular institutions. Kosagovskii once again stresses the value of the *mohajers* as one of the main assets of the Brigade. As for 1905, writes Kosagovskii, it's the highest time to use the *mohajers*' homesickness and desire to come back within the Russian borders. Kosagovskii understands well that it will be illegal to address the *mohajers* directly from the Russian government. “They need to be interested without compromising Russia, in a tidy way, so to say.”. Kosagovskii volunteers to perform this task if given sufficient authorities and guarantees.

Interesting is his accent on employing in this role also of foreign merchants and commissioners, and also of the Armenians. Mentioning merchants as spies hints at the British experience in the area. The talk about Armenians takes a step in the same direction. Kosagovskii says that the Russian Armenians are generally dissatisfied with Saint Petersburg, whereas in contrast to that Indian Armenians “are ready to work wholeheartedly for the British crown”.<sup>158</sup> Kosagovskii then calls for wider propaganda among the Armenians in Persia to make them loyal to the Russian empire to use their help in case of need.

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<sup>157</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591, 7.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

Kosagovskii is critical about the behaviour the Russian subjects conduct in the sphere of trade. Russian government, it is true, applies various benefits to promote its trade: excise taxes on the Russian tea, sugar and alcohol were abolished, and the import of Russian goods was supported and facilitated. Kosagovskii raises heavy criticism on the use the Russian merchants make about these benefits<sup>159</sup>.

According to him, all the three main export products are largely smuggled back to Russia and sold there, as the merchants find it more profitable to import tea, sugar and alcohol into Iran legally and without excise taxes, and then smuggle it back to Russia and sell locally. At times, says Kosagovskii, barrels with sugar are filled with stones, barrels with alcohol are filled with water instead, and to escape the border check, a cylinder filled with alcohol with the right diameter is put into the barrel's hole. Kosagovskii calls Russian merchants "greedy fools"<sup>160</sup>. According to him, they crave to get 100% of the income of all the goods they sell. "An Englishman is excited when he gets to sell the goods with 25% profit, whereas a Russian tears out his hair and says he's bankrupt when he gets 45%". In this way, Kosagovskii says, the merchants gradually spoil the Russian image.<sup>161</sup>

The conclusions that Kosagovskii draws after his lengthy project are explicit and telling:

**This is how we should take the control over the whole country in our hands. This is the preliminary conquest of the country, to make sure that no important event will happen in Persia without us taking part in it. To make the actual conquest bloodless, by attracting people's hearts to our side, we should be very skillful in dealing with the folk(narodnyi) psychology and**

<sup>159</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 371, 90.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

**everyday peculiarities in Iran. ... And when the soldiers will come, everything should be already prepared for them.**<sup>162</sup>

The quotation speaks for itself, summarizing how Kosagovskii viewed the zenith of Russian activity in Iran. Russian empire, obviously primarily leaning on the Persian Cossack Brigade, will create a secret intelligence network, the primary goal of which will be to collect information about the country and its important people to promote positive image of Russia and have influence at the most important positions in the state. To coordinate the actions of all the agents and officers, Kosagovskii suggests creating a position of consul general in Northern Iran, with vast authorities approaching the ones of a general governor or a British viceroy in India. Across the whole project of Kosagovskii a latent comparison with British India can be felt, be it in the position of a consul general, in the suggestion to make the Armenians in Persia as loyal to Russia as their compatriots in India are to the British crown, or even in the direct request to get the programs the British use to promote their influence in the colonies. The final step, after the “bloodless conquest” would be actual invasion, with the armed forces coming into the country and establishing official control over it. One might wonder if Kosagovskii did not plan to turn Iran into something similar to British India for the Russian tsar.

Summing up everything that Kosagovskii had said and done, he proved himself to be holding on to the Orientalist way of thinking. He has a low opinion about the local culture, climate and nature, in many cases just because they don't match what he used to have in Russia. Women are easy and beautiful, while men are small and sick – a rather strange concurrence to happen. Kosagovskii is, however, genuinely interested in the country, he has thoroughly studied various aspects of its life, from silkworm breeding to water supply and sewerage. He always

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<sup>162</sup> RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 591, 8.

stays a Russian officer, however, and in most of his notes and descriptions the thought goes to find out a way this or that can be used for the sake of the thriving of the Russian case in Iran. His activities in the Brigade are obviously aimed not at strengthening the Persian military, but at spreading Russian influence in Iran. He draws a line under everything by openly saying that his goal is to aid as much as he can in making Persia a Russian domain.

The plans of Kosagovskii, however ambitious they were, were not to come to life. Two years after Kosagovskii submitted his suggestion to the General Staff, on August 31, 1907, in St. Petersburg, Russia, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs A.P. Izvolskii and British ambassador Arthur Nicholson signed the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which brought shaky British-Russian relations to the forefront by solidifying boundaries that identified respective control in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. The agreement had many reasons lying under it, with the increasing power of Kaiser Germany, among the greatest ones in it. Iran was divided into spheres of influence, what marked the end of the Great Game in Central Asia. Russia was given bigger possibilities for action in the Northern Iran. The Persian Constitutional Revolution upset many plans, even though Russia tried to use its increased authorities through the Cossack Brigade, pro-Russian Mohammad-Ali shah and Shapshal khan (Sergei Markovich Shapshal), the mentor of the shah. The beginning of the First World War saw Russia giving up the neutral zone between its own and the British sphere of influence for London in exchange for the Straits and Constantinople. The Revolution of 1917 put all plans to an end, giving the Brigade into the hands of the English. Kosagovskii lived just to witness the faith of his work:

on the 30th of August, 1918 he was shot by the Bolsheviks in the yard of his own mansion Pogostikha in the Valdaj mountains<sup>163</sup>.

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<sup>163</sup> Kosagovskii V. A.. Iz teheranskogo dnevnika polkovnika Kosagovskogo. [From the Tehran diary of colonel Kosagovskii], foreword. (Moscow, 1960), 2.

## Conclusion

The Persian Cossack Brigade is a unique unit in the history of Iran as well as Russia. The history of the Brigade itself is complex; it involves and reflects histories of personalities and processes. Through it, we can follow the story of a Russian officer, his vision of Iran and his mission in the country in the Orient. Through the history of the Cossack Brigade also the history of changes in the Russian policy in Iran can be traced.

The case study of colonel Kosagovskii as a Russian imperialist outside the Russian borders is presented in three stages. First, his activity in the Brigade is presented within the 2 larger problems. The first one is within the armed forces of Persia, that underwent attempts of modernization several times throughout the 19th century. The attempts affected the whole country as well, but were largely unsuccessful and thus the bad state of the Persian army created a reason for the Nasr al-Din Shah to turn to the foreign aid in creating new military units, one of which came to be the Persian Cossack Brigade. The second problem was the expanding Russian imperialism. Russia finished the conquests in Central Asia by the last quarter of the 19th century, and by moving southeastwards new options and possibilities were opening for the Russian Empire, with Iran as one of them. The contested space of the Great Game in Asia gave Saint Petersburg another incentive to promote its interests in Iran against the English ones; and Persian government found it useful to play on the difference between the two sides to achieve its own goals. The Persian Cossack Brigade was brought to life in these complex circumstances.

The following history of the Brigade was extremely uneven what indirectly tells about the absence of any directives from the Russian government concerning the plan of the Brigade's development.

The sources left by colonel Kosagovskii reveal his attitude to his job as a head of the Russian military mission in Iran, his role in the development of the Brigade and his view on the perspective of the military unit under his control. The analysis of the sources reveals Kosagovskii's typical Orientalist approach to the people and the country he was working in. The officer shows sincere curiosity in the exotic environment he got into. Apart from his direct responsibilities, he works in a real scholarly spirit and tries to research all the topics that attract his interest, such as irrigation, silkworm breeding, position of women etc, not just for himself but with the purpose of opening the country for the Russian readers. He is named among the first Russian Oriental scholars in Iran. Thinking of Kosogovskij, however, falls in line with the Western colonist/imperialist understanding of the aborigines: those people are predetermined by the nature they live in, and thus, hardly anything can be done to change their condition. The Russian officer comes from the position of his undoubted superiority over the local people. Among other things, this is reflected by the use of the humiliating ethnonym "persiuk". The presupposition towards the locals is seen when he calls all men sick and ugly, whereas women are mostly beautiful with soft white skin. Even the highest officials of the Persian court are treated in the diaries of Kosagovskii with little respect. Kosagovskii in his notes views local people and customs in the spirit of almost stereotypical Orientalism. There is a topic which goes like a red thread through the materials of the officer, which is the spread of Russia's influence in the region and serving Russian interests rather than Persian ones.

Kosagovskii shows himself as a devoted Russian imperialist in the plans and letters that he made for himself and partly sent to the General Staff in Saint Petersburg. He puts it up straight: the end of all Russian activities in Iran should be the conquest of the Eastern country, either de-facto or de-jure. This leaves no doubt about Kosagovskii's worldview. All of his actions, aspirations and researches should end only in turning Persia, at least the northern part of it, into a Russian domain. Kosagovskii's suggestions include creating a secret intelligence network, based on the Persian Cossack Brigade, to promote positive image of Russia and have influence at the most important positions in the state. Kosagovskii suggest himself to take the position of consul general in Northern Iran to coordinate the actions of all the agents and officers. After establishing a positive image of Russia and seizing control over the levers of influence, as Kosagovskii calls it, "a bloodless conquest", an actual intervention along the previously built roads and railways would take place and turn a significant part of Iran into a Russian dominion, very much like India. Kosagovskii turns to the British experience several times directly in his plans, up to a direct statement to get the plans along which the British conduct their policy in the East.

All the sources used tell a comprehensive story about Kosagovskii. Vladimir Andreevich writes about the Orient in the case of Persia, he researches it as his position and knowledge allow him; he plans to teach the audience in Russia about it. He describes Persia within the framework of Russian imperial expansion, settles it as a subject of Russian interest in his own mindset. His own work in the Persian Cossack Brigade is targeted not at developing the Persian military, as the official purpose would say. Kosagovskii openly states in the sources that the Brigade should serve as the main tool in conquering and ruling over Iran, and his efforts are



directed towards that goal. He uses his position as a Westerner to criticize Persia and build his authority upon it, many times just because the local customs don't meet his Western expectations. Putting all of these characteristics into the framework of Orientalism as described by Said, Kosagovskii makes a typical Orientalist.

His aspirations towards conquest and expansion touch the spheres of colonialism and imperialism. Kosagovskii intends to build his, and Russia's relationship with Iran clearly on an unequal basis, in the sphere of human interaction as well as on the territorial level, with the open control of Russia over at least a part of Persia in the end. The advantages that Kosagovskii suggests to bring to Iran, such as new roads, schools with Russian teachers and health care centres with Russian doctors in them are not even claimed to serve any civilizational function. On the contrary, it is stated plainly that these civilizational achievements should be brought into Iran primarily for the sake of future conquest.

Robert Young makes the following difference between imperialism and colonialism: whereas imperialism operates from centre and is a recognized state policy, being developed for ideological as well as financial reasons, colonialism is much more aimed only at commercial intentions.<sup>164</sup> The question is, what level of support from the centre did Kosagovskii enjoy during his work in Iran and after?

At the moment of his start in 1894 Kosagovskii had to deal with the devastation within the Brigade caused to a large extent by the poor management of the previous officers at the head of it with no general line of the General Staff. The occasion when Kosagovskii managed to prove the Brigade's effectiveness and

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<sup>164</sup> Gilmartin, Mary. Gallaher, C. et al., 2008. *Key Concepts in Political Geography*, (Sage Publications Ltd. : Imperialism/Colonialism.), 116.

usefulness during the unrest after the Nasr al-Din Shah's death, together with the attempt of the British to seize control over the Brigade made an impression on the Russian government. During the following years the Brigade enjoyed support from the Russian government, which was largely caused by the actions of Kosagovskii and his activity in asking for this support from Saint Petersburg, as well as understanding of the value of the Brigade as a tool of influence. It was at this time when Brigade at the first time could be competently called a Russian agent. The activity of Kosagovskii also led to that he spent the most time on his position compared to his predecessors.

Despite his accomplishments and interest, however, Kosagovskii was taken off, and under Chernozubov the Brigade again started to face problems and neglect by the Russian Government. The change came only when the Cossacks became needed to suppress the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, but until 1907 the Brigade remained rather deserted by the Russian official attention. The Russian policy in Iran seemed to be rather inconsistent and by no means following the plans of development that Kosagovskii proposed.

My explanation is that Russia did not have intention to follow any masterplan of promoting its influence in Iran. Neither did it intend to turn Iran in its dominion in the near future. Russian Government was not the initiator of the creation of the Persian Cossack Brigade. Saint Petersburg used the Brigade only in case of need, only on some occasions when it might have been useful, such as the Mozaffar al-Din Shah's succession to the throne, as a counteragent against the British influence, or against the constitutionalists in 1907. Otherwise, the officers in the head of it were left to themselves, as Russia felt no need of them. Such is the reason for the ups and downs the Brigade had throughout its history.

Why, then, wouldn't Russia use such a good chance and such a useful tool as the Brigade was? The plan by Kosagovskii in general looks doable and reasonable, and there is no doubt that if Vladimir Andreevich would have been appointed to the position he asked for, he would have done everything to achieve his goals. N. Stremoukhov gives an answer to this in the *Niva* magazine back in 1879, when the Brigade was just established:

“During the whole century Russian leaders had the possibility in their hands to reach India through the Central Asia. ... Until now they seriously review the possibility of intruding India with a concrete goal, and many openly acknowledge this. But their real goal is not Calcutta, but Constantinople. And Britain will go for any concession to save its colonies in Asia from danger. So this is the sum and essence of Russian politics.”<sup>165</sup>

Thus, Russian politics in Iran largely was based not on annexing of any part of Iran, but on counterbalancing British aspirations in the region. Within such a framework there was no need in expanding the Brigade to a large size and introduce a network of agents. Just keeping the threat in the Central Asia seemed enough for the Russian diplomats to achieve their goals. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, another player entered the game, Germany, what moved Britain and Russia one step closer to reaching an agreement. The Anglo-Russian Convention, signed on the 31 August, 1907, put an end to the Great Game by marking zones of influence in the Asia. This agreement was one of the stages of creating the Entente against the block with Germany and Austro-Hungary at the centre.

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<sup>165</sup> Stremoukhov, N. *V Srednei Azii. (Iz zapisok russkogo puteshestvennika). [In the Middle Asia. (From the notes of a Russian traveler).]* // *Niva*, №24, (Saint Petersburg, 1879), 462.

The consequences of signing the Convention of 1907 proved that Russia was not as interested in the territories to the south of its zones of influence in Asia and rather used them to reach its goals in Europe – the same policy as described by Stremoukhov back in 1879. The “real politics” was understood as the decision to grasp less, but lose less as well. As the former ambassador to Constantinople Zinovyev wrote, “it is more than desirable to take our fleet on the Black Sea out of that inertia it is now in, and open the Mediterranean for it. This question can be discussed only in case we achieve sincere support from the side of the English. ... All the plans of invading India do not stand up to criticism and should be put rather to the realm of fantasy. ... In case of England’s readiness to promote the solution of the question of the Straits, from our side concessions in the Central Asian question are possible”.<sup>166</sup> Obviously, in this course of events the Persian Cossack Brigade could have played only an auxiliary role, and in case of need Kosagovskii’s could have been given up as “concessions”, what, in fact, happened. This does not deny the characteristic of Kosagovskii as an orientalist and imperialist, and does not deny his contribution to the Brigade, Russian case in Persia, and spreading knowledge about this far away country in Russia.

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<sup>166</sup> *Sbornik Diplomaticeskikh dokumentov, kasayushikhsia sobytiy v Persii s konca 1906 po iyul 1909 gg. [An issue of diplomatic documents concerning the events in Persia from the end of 1906 to the July of 1909].* (Saint-Petersburg, 1911-1913). 44.

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