

Scientific article

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N. N. Konshin's Trading Activities in Persia in the Second Half of the 1880s

Abstract

The article assesses trading activities of the Russian entrepreneur Nikolay Konshin in the late 19th century Persia, which was an important economic partner of the Russian Empire, as the contemporary Islamic Republic of Iran remains for the Russian Federation. Geopolitical turn of Russia from the West to the East makes studying Russia's trading relations with Eastern states,

and Iran in particular, more significant. The novelty of this work is in its addressing not a story of success, but the negative experience of Nikolay Konshin's foreign trade company founded in 1884 in the capital of Persia, Tehran. The author identifies reasons that led to company's closure in 1890 and forced Nikolay Konshin to ultimately quit the Persian market. In 1889 he organized an exhibition of Russian industrial products as a measure designed to support the company's trading activities. It was supposed to familiarize the Persian population with the range of Russian light industry products, previously unknown at the Persian market, and to secure orders from local merchants for Nikolay Konshin's firm. However, the expectations failed to materialize and the company did not receive the necessary impetus for its development. The author identifies causes of the exhibition's failure, assesses Nikolay Konshin's efforts in exploring opportunities of the Tehran market development, and clarifies their significance for the development of the Russian trade in Persia. The study is based on the documents stored in the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire; namely, Nikolay Konshin's petition to the Minister of Finance Ivan Vyshnegradsky and a number of consular reports addressed to the head of the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ivan Zinoviev. They offer explanations for failure of both Nikolay Konshin's company and his exhibition. The analysis of entrepreneurial activities of a particular Russian company has made it possible to identify general features and characteristic peculiarities of the Persian market. The factors that hindered the advance of Russian trade in Tehran under tough European competition are also identified. Despite the failure of Nikolay Konshin's trade business, Russian entrepreneurs highly appreciated his activities in establishment of the Russian economic presence in Persia. The author concurs with such appraisal; Nikolay Konshin was instrumental in laying the groundwork for future penetration of the Russian trade capital onto the Tehran market, which had hitherto remained terra incognita for the Russian business community.

Keywords

Historical sources, Iran, Russian-Persian trade, late imperial Russia, international market, industrial exhibition, Russian merchants.

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