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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.15876753](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15876753)**ABSTRACT**

This article explores the issues surrounding the study of M.F. Akhundzada's oeuvre in Georgian literary scholarship. It is shown that Akhundzada's creative legacy has been examined not only by Azerbaijani literary scholars but also by Georgian researchers, who have written articles and monographs on his work. This process began during the lifetime of the prominent writer and continued to develop steadily thereafter. During this time, both the scope of Akhundzada's creative output expanded, and a new chapter in interethnic relations was written. That is to say, Georgian literary criticism has in many instances uncovered facts unknown to Azerbaijani scholars and has studied Akhundzada's work from various perspectives. In this sense, one may even argue that the history of researching Akhundzada's oeuvre in Georgian literary studies precedes that of Azerbaijani national literary scholarship. In general, Georgian literary criticism has engaged in a comprehensive analysis of this great playwright, writer, reformer, critic, and intellectual, considering both his life and work in full detail. All the ideas and viewpoints expressed in these studies serve to highlight Akhundzada's creative contributions in the context of interethnic friendship.

**Keywords:** Akhundzada, Tbilisi, works, Georgian literary studies, evaluation.

Mirza Fatali Akhundzada (Akhundov), the distinguished 19th-century Azerbaijani writer, founder of Azerbaijani dramaturgy and literary criticism, great thinker, public figure, educator, poet, and materialist philosopher—widely known around the world as the “Muslim Molière”—was not only one of the principal figures of Tbilisi's literary milieu but also, through his enduring creative legacy, made his mark far beyond it. Notably, Akhundzada spent 44 of his 66 years in Tbilisi, and it was in this city that he authored his world-renowned comedies. His work occupies an important place in the treasury of literary relations between the Azerbaijani and Georgian peoples, both of whom boast rich literary traditions [5, 39]. For this reason, his oeuvre has been a major object of research not only in Azerbaijani literary studies but also in Georgian literary scholarship.

This process began while the author was still alive and continued to gain momentum in subsequent periods. The significance lies not only in the study of Akhundzada's work but also in the value of such research and its conduct at a high level of interethnic scholarly cooperation. This has allowed both the scope of his work to grow and a new dimension of intercultural relations to emerge. In many cases, Georgian literary criticism has revealed facts previously unknown to Azerbaijani scholarship and has examined his legacy from a variety of angles. Thus, it may be asserted that the study of Akhundzada's work in Georgian literary scholarship historically precedes similar efforts in Azerbaijani national literary studies. The playwright maintained constant contact with his Georgian and Russian contemporaries, and his works were always highly regarded in both Georgian and Russian literary circles.

It is well known that Mirza Fatali Akhundzada's comedies were staged in Tbilisi during his lifetime—first in Russian, then in Georgian—long before they were performed in the original language in which they were written. The newspaper *Kavkaz* provided some information about these performances. In 1852, when *The Adventures of a Miser* (*Xirs quldurban*) was

staged, *Kavkaz* published several notices. The reviews and critical remarks that appeared in relation to the performances—first in Russian, then in Georgian—during the writer's lifetime may be regarded as the earliest evaluations of his creative output. Although these accounts were presented as mere news items, they reflected the opinions of the literary milieu:

“The outcome exceeded expectations. After the great Frenchman, the work of the talented Tatar (Azerbaijani – M.Ç.) writer M.F. Akhundzada was presented to the audience, and everyone was pleased with the comedy” [7].

In a subsequent issue of *Kavkaz*, further reports concerning preparations for the play were also published. These articles in the local press attested to the value of Akhundzada's works. For example, a note in the St. Petersburg journal *Biblioteka dlya chteniya* opened the way for some of the earliest analytical assessments of his comedies:

“A few weeks ago, in search of a new and excellent play for a home performance, one of my dear friends, newly returned from the Caucasus, rescued me from difficulty; he gave me three issues of the *Kavkaz* newspaper in which Mr. Fatali Akhundzada's comedy was printed. The entire troupe read it and was astonished” [2, 42].

It is worth noting that *The Adventures of a Miser* was translated into Georgian as early as 1884 and published in issues 5–6 of the journal *Iveria* [5, 42].

After Akhundzada's death, further research on his work continued. Among Georgian writers, Akaki Sereteli was the first to approach Akhundzada's work critically, referring to him as the “Azerbaijani Molière.” Moreover, Sereteli translated *The Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran* into Georgian and published it in his journal *Krebuli*. The play was staged on the Georgian stage on January 31, 1898, where it achieved great success.

In an article dedicated to Akhundzada, the renowned Georgian poet A. Sereteli praised him as a masterful artist of the Azerbaijani people and the founder of Azerbaijani dramaturgy. He particularly valued Akhundzada's comedies written in the vernacular,

especially *The Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran*. Sereteli wrote:

“This play is the work of the talented writer M.F. Akhundzada, who was a contemporary of Giorgi Eristavi and began his literary activity alongside him. Demonstrating great talent, Akhundzada vividly depicted the life of our Tatar (i.e., Azerbaijani – M.Ç.) neighbors with mirror-like clarity. His plays are the product of immense talent. There are no artificial words or thoughts in these works” [8].

The comparison of Akhundzada’s comedies to a mirror is apt, as this metaphor would later be frequently employed to describe the essence of his dramatic work. Indeed, all of his comedies reflected Azerbaijani life as if in a mirror. The comparison drawn between Akhundzada and the Georgian dramatist G. Eristavi is no coincidence: both were the founding figures of dramaturgy in their respective national literatures. Moreover, their works share many common features, particularly in their faithful representation of popular life. Through humor and satire, Akhundzada exposed fraudulent alchemists, swindlers, the decline of the nobility, and the ignorance of the masses. Eristavi likewise depicted social life and created similar types. This closeness stems from their shared social context.

*The Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran* was also staged in Tbilisi. A misattribution of the play to A. Sereteli was corrected during the staging. According to D. Aliyeva,

“In connection with the staging of the play, A. Sereteli published an article in the newspaper *Snobus purtseli* in which he expressed great admiration for Akhundzada’s work” [1, 95].

A. Sereteli had a deep affection for the Azerbaijani people and approached their culture and literature with sincere interest. While still a student in the Faculty of Oriental Languages, he eagerly studied the Azerbaijani language. It is no coincidence that Sereteli was the first to translate Akhundzada’s plays into Georgian. Today, one can still find copies of these comedies in his home museum in the village of Skhitvori.

Sereteli’s heartfelt attitude toward all peoples bore fruit in 1908, when his 50th birthday was celebrated and hundreds of Azerbaijanis, including Mammad Azizbeyov and Nariman Narimanov, sent their congratulations.

The “second life” of Mirza Fatali Akhundzada in Tbilisi began in the early 20th century. The events held in 1911 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his birth, organized by both Georgians and Azerbaijanis, demonstrated that he had not been forgotten by either nation. These celebrations may be considered the beginning of his posthumous cultural revival. At that time, some of his Georgian contemporaries had already passed—Iliya Chavchavadze had been assassinated by the Tsarist regime, and Giorgi Sereteli had died after a long illness. Of his Georgian contemporaries, only Akaki Sereteli and Vazha-Pshavela were still alive. The commemoration in 1911 took place before the exact date of Akhundzada’s birth had been firmly established. According to the press of the time, the jubilee committee was headed by Prince Amir Kazim Mirza of Iran. On December 5, 1911, at 12 noon, the new Sheikh

ul-Islam of the Caucasus, Pishnamazzade, offered a funeral prayer at the Shah Abbas Mosque and delivered a short speech, in which he called Akhundzada a cultural pioneer among the Muslims of the Caucasus [13].

This event was covered not only by Russian-language newspapers such as *Zakavkazye* and *Kavkaz*, but also by Georgian-language publications including *Saxalxo Gazeti* and *Temi*. The fact that Firudin bey Kocharli, the founder of Azerbaijani literary studies, was among the organizers of this jubilee further underscored its significance. The commemoration of M.F. Akhundzade did not end with this single event; several other commemorative programs were also held. Ä. Binatoghlu referred to the grand jubilee celebration held on December 12, 1911, at the Tbilisi Aristocratic Theatre as the pinnacle of the events organized in connection with the centenary of M.F. Akhundzade’s birth. He wrote: “The ceremonial session was opened by F. Kocharli. A. Gaibov read the writer’s biography. Congratulatory speeches were delivered by K. Andronikov, a representative of the Georgian Dramatic Society and the Georgian Drama Troupe, G. Akhaltsikheli, editor of *Saxalxo Gazeti*, G. Diasamidze, editor of *Temi*, Ä. Hagverdiyev, and others. Telegrams were read aloud” [2, p. 131].

By the late 1920s, the literary legacy of M.F. Akhundzade became a renewed subject of scholarly investigation in both Azerbaijan and Georgia. Following the Azerbaijani People’s Commissariat’s acquisition of copies of the playwright’s archival materials from Georgia, new research into his work was initiated. Emin Abid and Äliädär Saidzade in Azerbaijan, and Ioseb Grishashvili in Georgia, turned to Akhundzade’s rich creative heritage and produced new scholarly studies.

The renowned Georgian poet and literary scholar, academician of the Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences (elected in 1946), and People’s Poet of the Georgian SSR (1959), Ioseb Grishashvili, had already attracted attention in 1932 with his article “M.F. Akhundov’s Eastern Poem on Pushkin’s Death,” which stood out for its factual richness. The article was published in the journal *Drosha* [9]. For his research, Grishashvili relied on a literal translation edited by Bestuzhev-Marlinsky. The article also touched on Akhundzade’s comedic works and emphasized his role as Azerbaijan’s first dramatist. While discussing the early editions of Akhundzade’s comedies, the author also assessed their artistic value. His discussion of Akhundzade’s novella *Aldanmuş Kəvakib* (The Deceived Stars) reveals the researcher’s deep familiarity with the writer’s oeuvre. The fact that he referenced F. Kocharli’s articles—first published in *Kavkazskiy Vestnik* (1901, No. 5), and later in *Na Rubezhe Vostoka* (1928, Nos. 3–4)—demonstrates that Grishashvili was well-acquainted with earlier Azerbaijani literary scholarship on the dramatist. He was evidently also informed about Akhundzade’s acquaintance and friendship with M.Ş. Vazeh in Ganja. Although he did not cite a specific source, he concluded: “Mirza Shafi taught Mirza Fatali Arabic and Persian, and inspired him to love classical Arabic literature” [9, p. 9]. This conclusion is largely consistent with prevailing views in Azerbaijani literary

studies. However, according to Ä. Binnatoghlu, “In reality, Mirza Fatali already had a good command of Arabic and Persian when he met Mirza Shafi; he did not need instruction in reading and writing. Apparently, realizing this later, Grishashvili removed the claim from subsequent editions of the article” [2, p. 118].

Grishashvili’s article also includes another claim that warrants critical attention, as it is not supported by contemporary scholarship. This pertains to the death of M.F. Akhundzade. Without citing any sources, Grishashvili wrote: “The body remained for several days in the deceased’s room, and no one considered arranging a burial. The government was forced to bury the already decomposing corpse near Kharpukh, close to the Muslim cemetery. Not a single Muslim followed the casket” [9, p. 9]. It must be noted that this and similar claims have been echoed by several Georgian and Azerbaijani writers and researchers. However, documented facts tell a different story. Sources indicate that while Akhundzade was still ill, he was frequently visited by his family and many notable contemporaries. Although his son Rashid was studying in Belgium, there were sufficient relatives available to attend the funeral. It is true that the then Shaykh al-Islam Molla Ahmad refused to lead the funeral prayer, but this was due to personal differences rather than religious condemnation. The second erroneous claim regarding his burial is that he was allegedly interred outside the Muslim cemetery. In fact, Akhundzade was buried according to his own wishes in the Tbilisi Muslim cemetery, beside his children who had died in infancy and his teacher M.Ş. Vazeh. Literary scholar Vilayat Guliyev has provided a more balanced assessment of the situation: “To be fair, M.F. Akhundov maintained personal relations with both leading Muslim figures of the Transcaucasus of his time—Shaykh al-Islam Molla Ahmad and Mufti Hüseyin Äfandi Gaibov. The great writer saw in them not merely religious figures but learned individuals well-versed in Eastern history, literature, and culture” [10, p. 158].

Ioseb Grishashvili later studied the life and works of M.F. Akhundzade in even greater depth, publishing another article in 1945 titled “M.F. Akhundov and Akaki Tsereteli.” This article introduced previously unknown facts to Azerbaijani literary studies. Grishashvili explored the reasons why Tsereteli had engaged with Akhundzade’s comedy *The Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran*, examined its translation into Georgian, and investigated its staging history.

In this article, Grishashvili wrote: “At the end of the 19th century, the Georgian public was not sufficiently familiar with the life and literature of the neighboring and kindred Azerbaijani people, particularly with the works of the outstanding playwright M.F. Akhundov, who was then referred to as the ‘Azerbaijani Molière’ and compared to Gogol and Ostrovsky. Today, however, the free Georgian people can acquaint themselves with the classics of Azerbaijani literature. This should be seen as the result of the efforts of progressive Georgian figures like A. Tsereteli. Tsereteli’s translation of *The Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran* is a testament to the friendship between Georgian writers and their Azerbaijani counterparts.”

In 1898, taking advantage of Tsereteli’s absence from Tbilisi and aiming to collect substantial funds, Kolabechashvili falsely announced that a new play by Tsereteli would be staged. Only on the day of the performance—January 31, 1898—did Tsereteli discover, to his great outrage, that he had been publicly declared the author. But it was already too late. After the performance, when the audience called for the “author,” the prompter informed them that the play had in fact been written by the Azerbaijani classic M.F. Akhundzade some twenty years earlier, and that Tsereteli was merely its translator. The play earned great admiration and affection from the Georgian audience.

The most noteworthy aspect of the article is the identification of the Georgian actors who performed in the translated comedy. From it we learn that the roles were played as follows: Sarab Khan – B. Kandelaki; Mirza Habib – B. Ketevnov; Ziba Khanum – K. Chekezishvili; Shöla Khanum – K. Gamkrelidze; Nisa Khanum – K. Kargareteli; Peri Khanum – K. Richeaulov; Haji Saleh – B. Abashidze; Teymur Agha – B. Svimonidze; and Rza – B. Gvaramadze. The article also provides, for the first time, a summary and comprehensive analysis of the comedy’s plot in Georgian, which is highly commendable.

Ioseb Grishashvili not only conducted research on Akhundzade but also translated into Georgian the very poem he had written about in his earlier article—*Eastern Poem on Pushkin’s Death*. In 1932, on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of M.F. Akhundzade’s birth, Grishashvili translated the poem into Georgian from Bestuzhev-Marlinsky’s Russian translation, and it was published in the fifth issue of the journal *Drosha*—the first ever translation of this work into Georgian.

In 1933, at the request of the journal *Mnatobis*, Grishashvili produced a second Georgian translation of the *Eastern Poem* based on a manuscript of the author preserved by Professor Aziz Sharif. This edition was published in 2,500 copies and included an extensive introduction on Akhundzade’s biography and literary contributions.

However, according to A. Binnatoghlu, despite Grishashvili’s familiarity with the internal harmony, form, and content of classical Azerbaijani poetry, he was unable to preserve the formal structure of *Eastern Poem on Pushkin’s Death* in his translation. A specialist with a strong command of Georgian opined that “although Grishashvili strove to retain the poem’s content, the disruption of its formal features considerably diminished the artistic quality of the translation” [2, p. 120].

One of the Georgian scholars who studied the literary legacy of M.F. Akhundzade was Doctor of Philological Sciences and Professor Konstantin Paghava. Born into a family of physicians, after graduating from university, K. Paghava initially engaged in Iranian philology. Nevertheless, a significant part of his research was devoted to the literature of the neighboring and friendly Azerbaijani people. His articles and monographs on Azerbaijani literature are among the finest examples of Georgian Oriental studies. His monographs “Nizami” (1964), published in the “Lives of Remarkable People” series, “Azerbaijani-Georgian Cultural Relations” (1967), and “Mirza Fatali Akhundov”

(1968), also part of the “Lives of Remarkable People” series, are regarded as some of the most substantial studies in Georgian literary scholarship.

In his monograph titled *Mirza Fatali Akhundov*, K. Paghava presents the life and creative path of M.F. Akhundzade—an individual who is a source of pride and honor for the Azerbaijani people—as well as his literary and public activity in Tbilisi, in a clear, scholarly, and concise manner. The work begins with a dialogue between M. Sh. Vazeh and Mirza Fatali, both well-known figures in the Azerbaijani literary milieu. It is noted that Haji Alaskar, having entrusted the young Fatali to Vazeh, now sees him transformed, cloaked in wisdom, and is compelled to accept this transformation. Although lacking precise source citations, the narrative reflects the author’s unique perspective on events and figures. His depiction of life in Tbilisi in 1834 is marked by both objectivity and historical accuracy: “The year 1834 drew to a close. The golden hues of autumn lent Tbilisi a unique charm. Metekhi and Narikala gazed proudly upon the ancient city, now fluttering with the wings of a new life. Tbilisi was gradually shedding its Asian visage, though remnants of Eastern life-style still lingered” [12, p. 10].

Describing Tbilisi with literary flair, K. Paghava portrays its changing face with journalistic and artistic details: the chewing of camels arriving via the Ganja-Shamkir road from Iran, the multilingual market where, in addition to Georgian, one could hear Persian, Azerbaijani, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and occasionally Russian—these were signs of the city’s transformation. The narrative emphasizes how Akhund Alaskar, despite many hardships, recognized Mirza Fatali’s potential and ultimately settled in Tbilisi. The episode of Mirza Fatali being hired as an auxiliary clerk in Baron Rosen’s chancellery—based on a petition by Akhund Alaskar—not only changed the course of his life but also that of Azerbaijani literature.

However, the narrative does not shy away from highlighting contradictions. The young Fatali, grateful to Baron Rosen and considering him a kind man, was unaware that within this “angel” dwelled a person who harbored disdain for the “inorodtsy” (non-Russians), and served as a devoted agent of the imperial regime. Fatali’s conflicting thoughts are apparent: on the one hand, he is surprised by Russian Decembrists’ defiance of the Tsar; on the other, he justifies the loyalty of Georgian nobles to their monarch in the failed 1832 rebellion. The horrific spectacle of public executions in Tehran continued to haunt him. Paghava notes Fatali’s growing interest in creative writing under the influence of Persian classical poetry, his admiration for Pushkin, and his early reflections on the vices of human nature.

When discussing Akhundzade’s *Eastern Poem on the Death of Pushkin*, Paghava attributes the poet’s choice of subject to his profound inner yearning for freedom. Upon hearing of Pushkin’s death, Akhundzade sat at home pondering the fall of a great pillar of poetry. How could a young poet memorialize this master in a manner worthy of him, especially after Lermontov’s iconic elegy? In writing this poem, Sabuhi not only expressed his own grief but that of the entire Muslim East. Drawing from the *qasida*, a genre widely practiced in the East, Paghava infers that Akhundzade

saw Russia as the only viable path to his people’s revival. While such a conclusion may not stem directly from the poem itself, it reflects the ideological climate of the time.

A noteworthy element in Paghava’s study is the poem’s re-publication after Akhundzade’s death. In 1884, the work appeared in *Russkaya Starina*, a Russian historical monthly. The translation was by A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky and the poem was published by Akhundzade’s friend A. Berge. Distinct from other scholars, Paghava suggests that Akhundzade may not have been aware of Lermontov’s elegy: “It is quite possible that M.F. Akhundov had no knowledge of Lermontov’s poem on Pushkin’s death” [12, p. 31].

Paghava argues that Pushkin was killed on January 29, and the news likely reached Tbilisi in mid-February, with Lermontov’s poem arriving only in early March. Hence, Akhundzade’s elegy must have been written independently in February: “This leads us to believe that M.F. Akhundov composed his ‘elegiac qasida’ in February, separate from Lermontov’s work” [12, p. 31].

This analysis, in our view, reflects certain essential truths about the significance of Akhundzade’s poem. The assessment by academician Isa Habibbeyli echoes a consensus in Georgian, Russian, and Azerbaijani literary criticism: “In 1837, at the age of 25, M.F. Akhundzade wrote *The Eastern Poem on the Death of Pushkin* and promptly had it published in *Moskovskii Nablyudatel*, thereby sparing Russian poets—who were silent due to the Tsar’s suspected role in Pushkin’s death—from shame, and fulfilling the moral duty of Russian men of letters” [6, p. 62]. This observation not only affirms the poem’s significance but elevates Akhundzade to a global literary echelon.

Akhundzade did not think locally—his reflections spanned the globe. When addressing Akhundzade’s comedies, K. Paghava emphasizes not only factual detail but also literary merit, revealing how Georgian literary criticism evaluated his dramatic oeuvre. Analyzing his first comedy, Paghava underscores how Akhundzade boldly satirized the ignorance, laziness, and fraudulence of clerics, as well as various professionals oblivious to societal change: “With this first comedy, M.F. Akhundov appears before his readers as a champion fighting to liberate people from the immoral grip of feudal ideology and religious dogma” [12, p. 41].

In the comedy *The Story of Monsieur Jordan and the Dervish Mastali Shah, the Renowned Magician*, the clash between the “new winds of time” and the historically doomed old order is highlighted. Paghava writes that the play criticizes “Sharia law, the legislative system of Islamic ethics, which for centuries mercilessly trampled on women’s human rights and kept them shackled” [12, p. 46].

Paghava also offers a positive evaluation of *The Adventures of the Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran*, noting that the Khan is vividly portrayed as foolish. The comedy’s conflict—centered on Mirza Habib’s unwarranted promotion, the boldness of female characters, and the farcical culmination of events—reinforces its satirical power. Teymur Agha, by exposing Mirza Habib’s incompetence, reinforces the play’s central message: “In this comedy, M.F. Akhundov critiques the

entire feudal system and its laws through the example of the Lankaran Khanate. The history of Eastern feudalism is replete with cruel acts of despotism and arbitrary punishments" [12, p. 50].

In his detailed analysis of Akhundzade's novella *The Deceived Stars*, Paghava aligns with Azerbaijani literary scholars in seeing a dual aim: the critique of Eastern despotic feudalism and the articulation of Akhundzade's political ideals—how the state should be structured and who should govern it. He writes: "From the standpoint of critical realism, the author exposes the obsolete and moss-covered traditions of Eastern feudalism, the irrationality of its religious and fanatical rule, the anti-popular nature of its governance, and the capriciousness of its viziers" [12, pp. 75–76].

Theatre critic Jafar Jafarov, in analyzing Akhundzade's comedies, essays, and public views, concluded that he fearlessly condemned despotism, social inequality, and religious fanaticism: "He relentlessly criticized all aspects of the political, social, and spiritual life in Eastern societies, exposing tyrants, clerics, and autocrats as the people's sworn enemies" [3, p. 303]. This critical spirit also permeates Akhundzade's *Letters of Kamal al-Dawla*.

Paghava closely examines Akhundzade's letters, his work on alphabet reform, and his correspondence. He not only studied this legacy thoroughly but also analyzed it thoughtfully. Drawing on Akhundzade's own writings, Paghava narrates his trip to Istanbul and his experiences there—his initial residence in the home of Mirza Huseyn Khan, a former Iranian consul in Tbilisi, and his eventual departure upon realizing that this supposed friend was slandering him before Ottoman officials as an "enemy of Islam." Nonetheless, Akhundzade did not waver and presented his project to Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha. Paghava concludes: "Having reached the age of seventy, M.F. Akhundov spent his days in this way. But he did not lose heart and remained devoted to his alphabet reform" [12, p. 99]. However, this contains a factual error: Akhundzade died in 1878 at the age of 66. Perhaps the author meant to indicate that he had entered his seventh decade, though the phrasing remains imprecise.

Konstantin Paghava also describes the final days of M.F. Akhundzade's life, and in doing so, does not repeat the commonly held but inaccurate narrative within the Georgian literary milieu—namely, that clerics refused to authorize Akhundzade's burial, that his funeral prayer was not performed, or that he was denied burial in a Muslim cemetery. From Paghava's account, it becomes clear that on his final morning, as Akhundzade opened his eyes for the last time in his two-story, balustraded house near Tbilisi's Tatar Square on the banks of the Kura River, he was asked how he wished to be buried. At that moment, the image of Mirza Shafi appeared before him, and recalling Omar Khayyam's quatrain—

*"I renounce both the church and the idol-worshippers, / Why should I build bricks upon the sea? / Who says Khayyam is bound for hell? / Has anyone returned from hell or heaven?"*—he said:

"You know well that I believe in no religion. It is of no concern to me how the living free themselves from the troubles of the dead. Bury me however you

wish,"—and after uttering these words, he closed his eyes for the final time [12, p. 124].

On July 9, 1958, during a literary gathering held at the summer theatre of the Orjonikidze Cultural and Recreational Park in Tbilisi to mark the unveiling of M.F. Akhundzade's monument, Georgian literary scholar and prominent theatre critic B. Jgenti, then secretary of the Georgian Writers' Union, declared:

"The memory of Azerbaijan's great writer, philosopher, and thinker M.F. Akhundov is equally dear to all of us—the peoples of the three brotherly republics. These connections stem from the shared spiritual heritage of three cultures, whose reflections are found in the Armenian epic 'David of Sassoun', the jewel of Georgian poetry 'Amirani', the immortal Rustaveli, and the great Nizami."

In 1968, Tbilisi State University published a voluminous Georgian-language textbook entitled *Anthology of Armenian and Azerbaijani Literature*. The book included discussions of the literary styles and selected works of fourteen Azerbaijani authors. Alongside the writings of Khagani, Nizami, Fuzuli, Vagif, J. Mammadguluzadeh, M.A. Sabir, A. Hagverdiyev, J. Jabbarli, S. Vurgun, S. Rustam, M. Rahim, R. Rza, and N. Khazri, the anthology also featured M.F. Akhundzade's *Eastern Poem on the Death of A.S. Pushkin* (translated by I. Grishashvili) and *The Deceived Stars* (translated by G. Shagulashvili).

In this anthology, which holds significant value in the history of the literary relations among the peoples of the Caucasus, Akhundzade's life is accurately portrayed:

"He is recognized in the history of Azerbaijani literature as the founder of the realist school, modern dramaturgy, new poetry, literary criticism, publicism, and literary studies." [4]

In general, the contribution of Georgian literary scholars to the study of M.F. Akhundzade's literary legacy is undeniable. In Georgian literary criticism, the life and works of this great playwright, writer, reformer, critic, and thinker are thoroughly analyzed from all angles. The opinions voiced and ideas advanced are all in service of exploring Akhundzade's oeuvre within the context of cultural solidarity among nations. Scholarly articles by G. Leonidze, S. Khutsishvili, D. Kobidze, G. Natroshvili, S. Lekishvili, and others, which examine Akhundzade's life and creative activity, stem from the enduring relevance of his ideas and the essential nature of his literary work.

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