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Bākikhānov and Akhundzādeh and the Literary Milieu of Tiflis

Hasan Javadi

Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley, California, United States; *javadi.hasan@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT

Abbās Quli Aqā Bākikhānov (1794-1847) and Mirzā Fatḥ'Ali Akhundzādeh (1812-78) both came from the same socio-economic class, performed the same professional function in Russian government service, and shared literary interests as shown by their membership of the same literary club in Tiflis. They also aimed at reforming and modernizing the Azeri and Iranian societies. However, it was also on this very subject that their differences became apparent. Not only did they disagree on what the nature of that change had to be, but they also diverged about the pace of change. Whereas Akhundzādeh wanted to travel in the fast lane to bring about modern and secular indigenous societies that were modeled after a modernizing Russia, Bākikhānov argued for traveling the slower lane, preserving what he considered was good and worthwhile of his traditional native cultures, which also included a modernized form of Islam and the teaching of Persian. The two men also differed in their approach to how to help bring about the desired changes. Akhundzādeh used his literary talent to mainly address the educated class by showing them in his plays and prose how *backward* their society was and, by implication, how necessary it was to secularize and Europeanize. Bākikhānov, being more of a Sufi-bent Muslim, wanted to reach Azeri society in a much more targeted way. Neither man was successful in their objective during their lifetime, although their works had a lasting influence on Azeri and Iranian reformers.

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1. Introduction

How can one compare ʿAbbās Quli Aqā Bākikhānov (1794-1847) with Mirzā Fatḥʾ Ali Akhundzādeh (1812-78) (or Akhundov in Soviet usage)? Comparing and contrasting the characteristics of these two prominent writers and reformers seems at first a bit out of place. One dies returning from Hajj and the other one is almost an atheist. However, these two, apart from their different views on matters such as religion, shared many points of view and belonged to the same literary circle founded by Mirzā Shafiʿ Vāzeḥ (1792-1852), who was a driving force in bringing together many intellectuals of the Caucasus (Alimohammadi, 2005). The literary milieu of Tiflis, and especially Mirzā Shafi himself, were sources of innovation and inspiration for these writers. They both were military officers and interpreters at the office of the viceroy of the Caucasus with varying degrees of loyalty to the Russian government. They both wanted to modernize their society through education.

ʿAbbās Quli Aqā Bakikhānov, also known under the pen-name Qudsi, was an Azerbaijani writer, historian, satirist, linguist, poet and philosopher. He was born on the 10th of June in 1794 in the village of Amirjan near Baku. Bakikhanov was a scion of the ruling dynasty of the Khanate of Baku and the nephew of the last khan of Baku. His father Mirzā Mohammad Khān II was the ninth Khan of Baku and was driven from his throne by his brother Mohammad Quli Khān.

Bakikhānov's childhood coincided with one of the most decisive and turbulent periods of the history of the Caucasus—the era of battles between Russia and Persia over the political domination in the region. Beginning a traditional education at home at the age of seven, he later on moved to Quba where he learnt Persian and Arabic and other customary academic subjects of the time for ten more years. It was here that 'Abbas Quli Aqā excelled in Persian and made a thorough study of the great poets of Persian literature. Then he learnt Russian, followed later by French and Polish. 'Abbas Quli Aqā's mother Sophia was Georgian and, when he moved to Tiflis at the age of 26, he lived with his maternal uncle in this city. In 1820, two years after his move to Tiflis he was employed as the Oriental interpreter for general Yermelov, the head of the Russian forces in the Caucasus, and except for eight years (1834-1842) when he lived on the estate of his father in Quba, he remained in the service of the Russian government until 1845. During his service in the Imperial Russian army, Bākikhānov participated in the Russo-Persian war of 1826-28. He later retired and lived in Quba, but traveled extensively in Russia and the Caucasus, meeting such important literary figures such as Pushkin and Lermontov.

Akhundzadeh was born in 1812 in Nakhu (Shaki in modern-day Azerbaijan), which at that time was still part of Iran. His father, Mirzā Taqi, was the *kadkhuda* of Khamneh, a town some forty-five miles northwest of Tabriz but, after losing his job, he came to Nakhu where he married his second wife Na'nāa Khanum, the niece of a local clergyman Hajji Akhund Askar in 1811. A year later, Fath'Ali was born and Mirzā Taqi decided to take his family back to Khamneh. However, with discord existing between the two wives, Na'nāa'

Khanum asked permission to leave for Nakhu. Thus, at the age of four, Fath'Ali came to live with Hajji Akhund. He would never see his own father again as he passed away when Fath'Ali was seven years old. In 1828, as a result of the Persian Army's defeat, Nakhu, along with sixteen cities of the Caucasus, were annexed by Russia. Consequently, Fath'Ali was born and grew up under Persian rule but would live the majority of his life under Russian rule. Further, he would serve his military career as an officer in the Tsarist Army. It is also important to mention that Fath'Ali's mother was descended from an African man in the service of Nader Shah. Perhaps this was the basis for Fath'Ali's affinity towards his famous contemporary Pushkin (Algar, 1984).

Earlier in life in Ganja, Akhundzādeh received lessons in calligraphy from Mirzā Shafi' and came under his spell. In his autobiography, Mirzā Fath'Ali describes how gradually a bond of friendship grew between him and Mirzā Shafi', and how the latter dissuaded him of becoming a clergy and advised him to "choose another profession" (Javadi, 2019, p. 5). This was a turning point in the life of Mirzā Fath'Ali.

Mirzā Shafi' introduced Akhundzādeh to modern learning but his uncle was opposed to all this. Eventually, he managed to come to Tiflis to learn Russian. Akhundzādeh was so successful in his Russian studies that in 1834 he was appointed apprentice interpreter at the office of the viceroy of the Caucasus. In the same year after twelve years of service and being "the Oriental secretary" to General Yermelov and being present at the signing of the Turkmenchay Treaty, Bākikhānov had taken a two-year leave of absence and traveled widely in Poland and Russia. It is in Tiflis that Bākikhānov meets Akhundzādeh, who was eighteen years his junior, and in spite of not having an official position, Bākikhānov decides to take his young friend under his wing. In fact, Akhundzādeh gets the same job that Bākikhānov had some years earlier as the Oriental Interpreter to the Viceroy of the Caucasus. In 1840, Mirzā Shafi' moves to Tiflis where, with the help of his former student Mirzā Fath'Ali, he secures the position of teacher at a boy's school. Here the literary activities of Mirzā Shafi' gains a new momentum and in 1844, he establishes the literary society of "Divan-e Hikmat."

At this period, Tiflis was the cultural center of the Caucasus. Along with Mirzā Shafi' Vazeh, whose *ghazal*s becomes famous in the German adaptation of Bodenstedt, Akhundzādeh, Bākikhānov, Gribayedov (1795-1829), the Russian playwright and ambassador to Iran, who was killed in Tehran, Khachatur Abovyan (1805-48), the founder of modern Armenian literature, the Georgians, Prince Alexander Chavchavadse (1786-1846), Nikoloz Baratashvili (1817-45), and Grigol Orbeliani (1804-83), all lived around this time in that city and knew each other. Lermontov, the great and liberal poet of Russia joined this group when he was exiled to Tiflis for writing an elegy on the death of Pushkin, and took lessons in "Tatar Turkish" from Akhundzādeh (Kelly, 2003, p. 232).[1]

[1] Akhundzadeh himself calls it "Azeri Turkish", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1960, Vol. 1, p. 332.

New modern schools had started in Tiflis. Newspapers were being published in Russian, Georgian and Azerbaijani. A public library and a theater were established. Russian, Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani poets and writers as well as the exiled Decembrists were active in Tiflis. At the time, there was another literary circle at the house of Chavchavadse, the founder of modern Georgian literature, where Akhunzadeh, Bākikhānov, Baratashvili, and Lermontov would come regularly. Friedrich Bodenstedt, during his stay in Tiflis, also frequented it. Abovian and Akhundzadeh both taught at the same school in Tiflis and knew each other. The proposed reform in the Armenian alphabet by Abovian might have influenced Akhundzādeh in his own project to reform the Arabic alphabet in its application to Turkish and Persian. At age ten, Abovian was taken by his father to Echmiadzin to study for priesthood, but five years later he dropped out and moved to Tiflis to study Armenian. It is interesting to note that Abovian disliked the Armenian church (Adamiyyat, 1970, p. 16). Although most of the works of our two writers Abovian and Akhundzadeh bear the cultural and the literary marks of this transnational cultural mélange of mid- nineteenth century Tiflis, yet they are also characterized by their concern for cultural and political conditions in Iran.

2. Discussion

Bakikhanov finished his major work *Golestan-e Eram* in Persian in Tiflis in 1841, then he began its translation into Russian with the help of the Polish poet T. L. Zabolotsky, who was in exile in the Caucasus and it was finished three years later. He had already published *Qanun-e Qodsi*, on teaching Persian grammar to the students to be used both in Azeri and Russian schools in Tiflis in 1831 and translated it into Russian in 1841. This was third published Azeri book (Javadi, 1996, p. 80). Out of ten books that Bakikhanov published six were in Persian and mostly educational. Inspired by the death of Pushin, Akhundzadeh published his first work, entitled "On the Death of the Poet" in 1837 in Tiflis, which was the first of his eleven Persian poems to be called "Oriental Poems." The short novel, *Aldanmish Kavakeb* (Misguided Stars: The Story of Sarraj Shah), which laid the groundwork for realistic prose both in Azeri and Persian literature, was published in 1859 in Tiflis.

However, his first significant literary activity came in the 1850s, through a series of comedies that satirized the flaws and absurdities of contemporary Azeri society, largely born of ignorance and superstition. Although some Russian translations of the plays appeared in Tiflis as early as 1853, it was the Persian translation arranged by Akhundzadeh himself in 1870 that achieved the widest renown, eclipsing even the Azeri original. The very first performance of one of the plays, *Kherse Quldurbasan* (The Bear and Bandit) was in the newly founded theater in Tiflis in 1852 in the Russian translation of Akhundzadeh himself. Akhundzadeh was affectionately dubbed "The Tatar Moliere."

The attitude of Bakikhanov and Akhundzadeh towards the Russian government is interesting to mention. Akhundzadeh's feelings toward Russian rule might have been mixed. Although he might not have been one of the Decembrists, he could not hide his democratic

feelings and yearnings for a freer society. Akhundzadeh was a conflicted intellectual. He stood between two diametrically opposed worlds, namely the world of his Russian employers and the world of the native Muslims from which he had come. However, he did not fit into either world; the old and archaic Muslim world was disintegrating in front of his eyes because it was backward and irrational and therefore unable to defend itself against European encroachment. But the superimposed Russian order was also too rigid, hierarchical, anti-democratic and oppressive. Even the liberal Russian élite often thought of the natives of the Caucasus as "noble savages" and more or less legitimized the expansion of their country towards the East. Thus, Akhundzādeh must have entertained mixed feelings about Russian rule. On the one hand, he despised tyranny and despotism. He was also a Persian nationalist who intended for his plays to awaken intelligent patriotism as well as the political and social consciousness of his readers. On the other hand, he saw Russian rule as an opportunity to attack traditional Islamic beliefs and to introduce modern ideas through a new educational system. Despite his strong philosophical opposition to Tsarist despotism, Akhundzādeh had convinced himself that the Russian administrators were the only authorities willing to allow him to attack Islam while at the same time protecting him from persecution by the clergy and the religious-minded Muslims who found his plays offensive and insulting. In this hierarchy of oppressive and backward ideas and institutions, the clergy and the corrupt and decadent Qajar monarchy were far more reactionary than the Russian Tsar who was at least introducing European reforms. Preferring the Tsarist regime to the Qajar monarchy and the Shi'ite ulema did not, however, mean acceptance of the Tsarist regime's oppression. At the heart of Akhundzādeh's ethos was a spirit of rebellion against social injustice and political oppression, for which the Azerbaijani intellectual held all absolutist political structures (be it Tsarist or Qajar) and all religious hierarchies (whether Christian or Muslim) responsible. Akhundzādeh's advocacy of women's rights was part of that larger struggle against tradition and political oppression.

Bākikhānov's faith in the Russian rule seems to have been less than that of Akhundzādeh. After his retirement from political and military life, Bākikhānov devoted himself to scholarship, which indicates a disillusionment with the government, though he could not openly display it.

In the modern sense of the word, however, Akhundzādeh was more "pro-Western" than Bākikhānov. They both were introduced to European culture through Russia, but the loyalty of Akhundzadeh was far more than his friend not only to the Russian culture but to the Russian state. One can see this when he propagates obedience to the Russian government in his plays. Similarly, in a Persian poem, he celebrates the achievements of the Russian army in the Crimean War. Whereas, in the life of Bakikhanov one senses some whift of the Dekabrists' revolutionary politics. In a large peasant uprising against the Czar's government in 1837, which is ruthlessly suppressed, Bakikhanov, who was living in his native village of Asmar and had nothing to do with the uprising, is summoned to Tiflis for interrogation. Later, in a Russian report entitled "Edifications" for the committee that was investigating the causes of uprising, Bakikhanov harshly criticizes the autocratic rule of Baron Rosen. Granted that he

had personal grievances against the viceroy, for him, Baron Rosen symbolizes the cruel side of the Russian government.

On the other hand, in spite of displaying a good deal of loyalty toward the Russian government, ironically Akhundzādeh was still under suspicion because soon after his death the secret police was at his door looking for his papers and unpublished works. He had already hidden them in his daughter's house (Rafili, 1959, p. 187).

A reformer and an outspoken liberal, Akhundzādeh was anxious to introduce the European way of life and democratic methods of government not only to his native Azerbaijan, but also to Iran, to which he felt a deep attachment, as he considered Iran his homeland. In his plays, as well as some of his other works he uses satire and humorous realism as the best ways to awaken a backward nation that had grown accustomed to wrongdoing, repression, and corruption. He advised those who looked upon the plight of their people with tearful eyes to arise and be strong so that they could regain their rights and bounties of God from the hands of "dogs and wolves" (Arianpour, 1993, p. 351).

In these plays Akhundzādeh introduced a new genre that was different from the traditional *ruhowzi*s and *ta'zia*s. These plays are important for two reasons: first, they were the very first Western-style plays in Azerbaijan and Iran and became models for later generations of playwrights in Azeri and Persian; second, they display all the reformist ideas of Akhundzādeh, which had a considerable impact on the political thought of the period. Since a theater was built in Tiflis in 1848, Akhundzādeh thought of introducing "the strange art of drama" to the Muslim world and hoped to bring about reforms through his satirical plays. He says that "in the experience of European philosophers nothing is more effective in uprooting vices and evils than are criticism, derision and ridicule." He also believed that drama was an effective medium for conveying a message to a largely illiterate public. However, the mild criticism of his plays becomes a rather biting social commentary in *Three Letters of the Indian Prince Kamal al Dowleh to His Friend, Iranian Prince Jalal al Dowleh,* and his other later works. Akhundzādeh hoped for an enlightenment movement associated with principles of education, political reform and secularism. Perhaps he was the first to propagate Western values fearlessly. One of the important works of Akhundzādeh in which he utilizes satire is *Three Letters of the Indian Prince Kamal al-Dowlah to the Persian Prince Jalal al-Dowlah and Their Answers to Each Other*, was written in Azerbaijani interspersed with Persian poems in 1863. Akhundzādeh himself with the aid of his friend Mostaşar al-Dowleh translated it into Persian, but he could not find any publisher for either version during his lifetime (Akhundzadeh, 1985, p. 42).

Apart from criticizing the religious elite he did not spare the behavior of the political elite as well. In a letter dated March 29, 1871 to his friend Yusuf Khan Mustashar al-Dowleh, Akhundzādeh quotes two examples of the senseless and childish behaviors of Iranian courtiers from his other friend Malkum Khan and asks, "What can one do with such people?" His own answer was that it is not by sermons or advice but by the "art of *kritika*," meaning

satire, that they can be reformed.[1] He considered this matter of such importance that he expounded it in another letter to Mirza Ja'far Qarajedaghi, where he writes: "Human nature is averse to sermons and morals... in the experience of European philosophers nothing is more effective in uprooting vices and evils than are criticism, derision and ridicule."[2] Moreover, satire must be unsparing and harsh. Akhundzādeh says that satire is much used in Europe and refers to the "satire and novels" of Voltaire and Alexander Dumas. He hoped that censorship in Iran would allow his *Letters of Kamal al-Dowleh* and the writings of Malkum Khan to be published. In addition, he believed that if the literacy rate increased, "the Iranians would be like the Europeans in fifty years."[3]

The most outstanding work of Bakikhanov is *Golestan-e Eram*, which can be said is a new beginning in Azerbaijani and perhaps in Persian historiography. He completed *Golestan-e Eram* in Persian in 1838, and translated it into Russian with the help of a Polish officer and friend, Zabolotsky as *The History of Eastern Caucasia*.[4] Bakikhanov was very much influenced by European and Russian historiography. He was particularly influenced by the Russian historian Nicholas Karamazin (1766-1826). Concerning the Avars, Turks, Khazars, Russians, etc., Bakikhanov quotes him several times and follows his methodology (Bakikhanov, 1970, pp. 17, 22-24). As Karamazin prepared himself to write his twelve-volume history of Russia by reading Livy and Tacitus, Bākikhānov made use of Classical sources, especially Plutarch and Strabo in giving an account of ancient Caucasus. Obviously, since Bākikhānov lived in a period prior to the advancement in ancient Iranian studies, like reading of cuneiform and Avestan, he depends on available sources in these areas. His account of Pishdadi kings of Iran is mostly of the *Shahnamah,* and his descriptions of the exploits of Alexander in the Caucasus come from Nizami of Ganjah or from Islamic traditions, which ultimately come from Pesudo-Callisthenes tradition of *Iskander-namahs*. In the case Babak Khurramdin, he follows the Islamic traditions and simply says that he was a follower of the Magi. In short, in areas such as these, which constitute the first part of the book, he follows the traditional historians, whereas in the rest he judiciously tries to put all available sources together.

At the very beginning, Bākikhānov describes his method of historiography which is very revealing:

> I gathered different subjects, connected them and whatever was remaining compared it with oral history. When writing a book, it is necessary to present the subject in a simple and concise manner, give the events sequentially, and connect them properly and avoid national prejudice, and siding with your own country. Also, [one should] provide references of every subject from trustworthy sources, as well as to correspondence and edicts of the kings, coins, remains of buildings, and different sayings of different people on related

[1] Letter to Mirza Yusuf Khan, *Tamthilat*, Tehran, Kharazmi, 1970, p. 14.
[2] Ibid. pp. 8-9. This letter is undated.
[3] Ibid. p. 14. Letter to Mirza Yusuf Khan.
[4] *Istoriya Vostochnoy Chasti Kavkaza*.

> subjects. I tried as much as possible, and resolved the points of difference with conjectures and logical assumptions. (Bakikhanov, 1970, p. xv)

Of particular interest are "not siding with your own country" and "avoiding national prejudice" (*ijtinab az ta'ssub-e millat*). The latter in reality means "religious prejudice" because "nation" in this period means "*millat-e Islam*". It is to the credit of Bākikhānov that as a historian he tries to be above partisanship. This reminds one of the saying of that classical Persian historian Bayhaqi who said: "When I decided to write this history I made sure that what I write would be after my own examination or from a trustworthy source."[1]

> و من که این تاریخ پیش گرفته ام التزام این قدر بکرده‌ام تا آنچه نویسم یا از معاینه من است یا از سماع درست از مردی ثقه

He divides *Golestan-e Eram* into five sections: The first covers from the earliest times to the Arab conquest; the second part takes the history of Shirvan and Daghistan to the Mongol invasion; the third period takes us to the establishment of the Safavids and the time of the Shirvanshahan reign; the fourth covers the Safavid state and the reign of Nader Shah; the last part takes us from the death of this king to the Golestan treaty of 1813, and the peace between Russia and Iran. Although in these divisions dynastic rules and wars between various kings and khans play an important role, the settlements of different ethnic groups and tribes as well as their languages, customs, religions, and ethnic qualities are not kept out of sight.

Apart from using Azeri, Turkish, Georgian, Persian and Arabic sources, Bākikhānov had access to Russian, Roman, Greek, and some other books as well as many documents and coins that apparently were in the family of the Khans of Baku. His extensive travels in the region as well as his scholarship enabled him to give detailed explanations about the origins of the names of the towns and even villages. While discussing the historical past of Shirvan and Daghestan, he gives detailed accounts of the customs, manners, religious beliefs, and languages of different peoples of the region, and very often extends his research to the whole region. Though the emphasis is on Shirvan and Daghestan, the book can be called an overall and comprehensive history of Azerbaijan until 1813.

From the point of view of creativity, it is interesting to compare these two. Bākikhānov was a poet of considerable talent in Azeri and Persian, and he devoted almost one third of *Golestan-e Eram* to the lives and works of the poets of the Caucasus in Azerbaijani and Persian. Akhundzādeh was not all that poetic, though he wrote a famous poem in Persian on the death of Pushkin, and he lacked the mystical fervor that Bākikhānov displays in some of his poems. But our two writers shared an interesting sense of innovation and a passion for introducing new methods and genres. Akhundzādeh introduced the "strange art of drama" in the Middle East, and he was the first in Azerbaijan to write a short novel in the modern sense of it (*Aldanmish Kavakeb*). Bākikhānov introduced the European method of historiography in

[1] *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*, p.638.

the way it existed at that time in Europe. Akhundzādeh and Bākikhānov both started their military career as "Oriental interpreters" at the office of the Viceroy of the Caucasus, and both eventually reached the rank of colonel. Both had extensive contacts and friends among the Russian and Persian intellectuals.

It is interesting to compare Bākikhānov and Akhundzādeh also from a religious point of view. As Rahim Ra'isniya puts it: "While 'Abbas Qoli Agha like Akhundzādeh believes in the salvation of mankind from backwardness through science and learning, unlike him [Bākikhānov] believes in the harmony between science and faith. In other words, with a foot in the past, he was facing the future" (Ra'isniya, p. 208).

At one time, he wanted to establish a Muslim college in Baku and an Oriental languages school in Tiflis. In 1832, he proposed that the government establish for Muslims a school where modern subjects would be taught in Russian as well as Azeri and Persian. But given Bākikhānov's strained relations with Baron Rosen it never materialized. His greatest accomplishment in the field of education was writing *Qanun-e Qodsi*, the first Persian grammar manual (Tiflis 1831). It was meant to be used both at Azeri and Russian schools, and he translated it into Russian in 1841.

Thus, although very liberal-minded and against the fanaticism of the religious masses as well as of the clergy, Bākikhānov was a religious man and especially fond of Sufism. Contrarywise, Akhundzādeh believed that Islam has been corrupted with superstitious believes and rituals and he criticized the institution of polygamy and the unequal position of women. He gave a materialistic interpretation to the works of men like Rumi and Jami.[1]

However, bringing about reform and introducting their countrymen to modern sciences and learning was the ultimate goal for both men, but their methods differed greatly. While Akhundzādeh tried to increase literacy through the changing of the Arabic alphabet, he was very much against traditional methods of education at *madrasahs*. In *Letters of Kamal al-Dawleh to Jamal al- Dawleh*, he especially scorns the traditional textbooks used at the schools. Similarly, in his *Resaleh-ye Irad* (*Treatise of Criticism*), Akhundzādeh tries to illustrate western methods of historiography and criticism. In a humorous and imaginary dialogue, while discussing various sections of the latest work of a contemporary and famous Persian historian Rezaquli Khan Hedayat, he criticizes the florid and rhyming prose of the work as well as the irrelevant use of poetry and flaws in its historical methodology. Authoring this critique and sending it for publication to the newspaper *Tehran* on August 2, 1862, Akhundzādeh challenges Rezaquli Khan to respond, while emphasizing that this is a normal method of "kritika" among scholars in Europe (Akhundzadeh, 1972, p. 161).

Bākikhānov tried to bring about reform through education. After submitting his proposal for schools in Baku and Tiflis, he went further and wrote a number of textbooks

[1] Mirza Fath'Ali Akhundov, *Maktubat-e Kamal al-Dowleh*, Naşriyat, 'Elm, Baku, 1985, pp.89-90. See also Hyseinov Heidər , *M.F. Axundovun Fəlsəfi Göryşləri*, EAAzF Nəşriyatı, Baku, 1938.

through which students were expected to learn Persian as well as modern sciences. Interestingly enough, six out of the ten books he wrote were in Persian. Of his Persian works, two were on modern astronomy and geography, one on the discovery of America and one a collection of moral stories. He wrote another work entitled *Tahzib al-Akhlaq*, (*Moral Purity*), which discusses Islamic teachings and compares them with Greek philosophy and Western values. In most of these works, Bākikhānov tries to find a middle ground between Western and Eastern values and teachings.

3. Conclusion

Bākikhānov and Akhudzādeh both came from the same socio-economic class, performed the same professional function in Russian government service, and shared literary interests as shown by their membership of the same literary club in Tiflis. They also aimed at reforming and modernizing the Azeri and Iranian societies. However, it was also on this very subject that their differences became apparent. Not only did they disagree on what the nature of that change had to be, but they also diverged about the pace of change. Whereas Akhundzādeh wanted to travel in the fast lane to bring about modern and secular indigenous societies that were modeled after a modernizing Russia, Bākikhānov argued for traveling the slower lane, preserving what he considered was good and worthwhile of his traditional native cultures, which also included a modernized form of Islam and the teaching of Persian. Thus, for instance, Bākikhānov did not want a Russified-Azeri society, and instead one that was modern along Russian lines but with Islamic religious values and Persianate cultural ones. The two men also differed in their approach to how to help bring about the desired changes. Akhundzādeh used his literary talent to mainly address the educated class by showing them in his plays and prose how *backward* their society was and, by implication, how necessary it was to secularize and Europeanize. Bākikhānov, being more of a Sufi-bent Muslim, wanted to reach Azeri society in a much more targeted way. He not only wanted to establish a Muslim college in Baku and an Oriental languages school in Tiflis, but he also wrote some textbooks (both in Azeri and Persian) that might be used at these schools. Neither man was successful in their objective during their lifetime, although their works had a lasting influence on Azeri and Iranian reformers.

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