



“WHEN AŞIQ BƏSTI SANG EVEN THE ROCKS WOULD CRY”: THE LEGACY OF AZERBAIJANI AŞIQ BƏSTI

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Abstract. This study focuses on the sung poetry of Aşiq Bəsti (1836–1936), a woman master of the aşıq art, Azerbaijan’s musical-poetic bardic tradition. Aşiq Bəsti, who was blind, not only travelled widely to perform, but also became part of 19th century Azerbaijan’s most renowned aşıq performance collectives. She reached the status of a master aşıq (ustad) who trained apprentices, and her songs have been passed down and are still performed in Azerbaijan today. The purpose of this article is to reveal the importance of Aşiq Bəsti’s creative life and legacy. The Azerbaijani aşıq art is a form of living oral narrative that has been performed continuously since the 16th century, yet has not been studied in the global context; this study introduces this artist in translation and opens a path towards integrating the aşıq art into discussions of comparative world literature.

This material for this study is drawn from scholarly manuscripts and archives as well as interviews with living aşıqs and folklorists. Methods used include fieldwork, historical-contextual analysis, comparative literary analysis and close reading. The results of the study open a window into the creative life of a rural woman artist working in a traditional genre. The discussion sets the historical and cultural stage then looks closely at Aşiq Bəsti’s life and legacy, with a close reading of several of her poems. The conclusion focuses on the multifaceted value of Aşiq Bəsti’s poetry both as personal creative expression and as a part of broader social movements.

Keywords: Azerbaijani aşıq, Turkic oral narrative, bardic arts, woman bard, Azerbaijani folklore, Azerbaijani music, gender in Azerbaijani culture, 19th century Azerbaijan.

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Introduction

Aşiq Bəsti in the Creative landscape of 19th century Azerbaijan.

This study focuses on the work of Aşiq Bəsti of Kəlbəjar (1836–1936), an artist of Azerbaijan’s traditional bardic aşiq genre. This genre is performed by professional bards who sing lyrical, didactic, or heroic songs and epic-length narratives called *dastan* while accompanying themselves on a long necked lute called the *saz*. Evolving out of the Central Asian epic tradition brought by the Oghuz Turks centuries earlier when they migrated westward, the Azerbaijani aşiq arose in the 16th century in early Safavid Tabriz in the court of Shah İsmayil I (1501–1524) (Abdullayeva 52). Forged from a combination of Turkic Shamanism, Islamic mysticism, and Azerbaijani musico-verbal poetics, the genre expanded north into the Caucasus and merged with local narrative traditions, becoming central to Azerbaijani life cycle ceremonies. By the nineteenth century, aşıqs had developed distinct local schools in different regions across the Caucasus, and the aşiq art reached what scholars consider a golden age, producing figures such as Aşiq Ələsgər (c. 1831–1926) who were respected as sages, mentors and local heroes who are still famous today in Azerbaijan (Ələsgər 9).

The 19th century was also a time when several women aşıqs achieved reknown, the best known being Aşiq Peri, whose example inspired a collective of women aşıqs (The Aşiq Peri Məclisi) who still perform in Baku. But Aşiq Peri was not the first or only women aşiq; women aşıqs such as Zernigar of Derbend are known to have been performing in the 18th century (Təhməsib and Axundov, 272), and by the 19th century there were women aşıqs performing throughout Azerbaijani lands (Cəfərzadə 3). One of the most remarkable was Blind Aşiq Bəsti, who although less known than Aşiq Peri can be counted among Azerbaijan’s most

remarkable oral poets. The Azerbaijani aşiq art is a form of living oral narrative that has been performed continuously since the 16th century, yet has not been studied in the global context; this study introduces the poetry of Aşiq Bəsti in translation and opens a path towards integrating the aşiq art into discussions of comparative world literature. While sung poetry is often categorized as “folklore” that is not as original or valuable as written literature, this article will argue that aşiq poetry is not only unique but also valuable as lyric poetry, as well as opening a window into Azerbaijani culture.

Aşiq Bəsti (1840–1936) left a legacy of poetry that is personally evocative while adhering strictly to the aşiq tradition, which has specific musico-poetic forms that must be followed in composition. All of her poetry was performed in song, and she herself did not read or write: however, her poetry was passed down through a master-apprentice system of oral tradition and eventually collected and written down. Aşiq Bəsti was from the Kəlbəjar region of western Azerbaijan and became a part of Aşiq Ələsgər’s *məclis* (a collective of aşıqs who often perform together), called the Qurban Bulağı *məclis* [The Qurban Spring collective] (Pirsultanlı, 2). Along with performing and traveling with the Qurban Bulağı, she became a master aşiq (*ustad*) who trained several apprentices (*şagird*). (Ələsgərov iii). Besides performing traditional *dastan* she composed many of her own songs; these were learned and passed down by her apprentices, and many are still performed by Azerbaijani aşıqs today.

Methodology

This material for this study is drawn from scholarly manuscripts as well as interviews with living aşıqs and folklorists. Specifically, the author spent 20 months from 2004 to 2006 conducting research and fieldwork on the topic of women aşıqs in the Republic

of Azerbaijan. This research included the study of Azerbaijani and Russian language scholarship on aşıqs and materials from archives. The author also conducted embedded fieldwork with the Aşiq Peri Majlisi women's aşiq collective, and recorded interviews with a number of male and female aşıqs in the years from 2004 to 2018. This study is drawn from all of these sources.

For scholarship on Aşiq Bəsti, the author drew especially on the works of scholars Əzizə Cəfərzadə and Sədnik Pasha Pirsultanlı, both of whom researched women aşıqs in two different spheres. Cəfərzadə was a literary historian, writer, and philologist at the Institute of Manuscripts, where she collected and published the first anthology of women aşıqs and poets (1974), then continued throughout her life to research women's literature and folklore. She left an archive of research and writing about women's literature in Azerbaijan which could be a resource for many years of research. Folklorist Sədnik Pirsultanlı specialized in collecting verbal folklore and oral history; besides being the first to collect and publish the poetry of Aşiq Bəsti (1964), he has collected verse and oral history about her from descendents and others in the region where she lived. He was also kind enough to introduce me to Ashiq Bəsti's descendents and to the Kəlbacər aşiq community in Gəncə so that I could interview them.

In the argument and analysis of the materials, the methodology is interdisciplinary, drawing from historical and cultural contextualization and comparative literary analysis based in close reading.

Goals and Results

The Azerbaijani aşiq tradition is one of the world's living epic tradition, along with other related Turkic epic traditions such as the Tukman *Bakshi*, the Kazakh

Zhirau and the Kyrgyz *Manasci*. All Turkic epic traditions are uniquely "syncretic" arts, fusing oral literature, music, and performance (Eldarova 32). Despite the fact that most of these West-Central Asian living epic traditions have been declared as "Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO ("Intangible"), these traditions are still little known outside of scholarly circles that specialize in them, and very little of the lyric poetry or epic has been translated into English. Because of this, these oral poet-bards are not known or studied comparatively as part of global literary studies. This study brings the oral poetry of Aşiq Bəsti into global conversations through historical and cultural contextualization, translation and analysis.

Discussion

Aşiq Bəsti was born into a time of tremendous change in Azerbaijan. During the first decades of the 19th century Azerbaijan was the site of a war for territory between Iran's Qajar Dynasty and the Russian Empire under Alexander I. In 1837, the Turkmenchai Treaty confirmed Russia's colonial hold over the north and separated northern from southern Azerbaijan at the Aras River, where it still is today (Swietochowski and Collins 128).

Initially, Russia's influence over northern Azerbaijan was administrative rather than cultural; except for a small percentage of local elites who were educated in "Russo-Tatar" schools and employed in the colonial civil service, life for the local population remained much the same, and Farsi continued to be used as the language of local bureaucracy (Swietochowski 14). Farsi also continued as the literary language of the elites, although the Turkic Azerbaijani language had its own written legacy and a thriving life in aşiq and folk poetry. Interest in the Azerbaijani vernacular had been growing among the intelligentsia since the 18th

century, championed by figures such as Molla Pənah Vaqif (1717–1797), who wrote poetry inspired by *aşiq* and folk poetry using Turkic *hece vezne* meters (Həsənli 184).

Mirza Fatali Axundzade (later Axundov) (1812–1878) is a well-known writer and public intellectual who embodies the dynamic spirit of the native intelligentsia of the 19th century. Educated in a Russo-Tatar school after receiving a traditional Azerbaijani education in classical Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman, he reached a high position as a translator in the Russian colonial administration in Tiflis (now Tbilisi), where he befriended a circle of exiled Russian intellectuals. At the same time, he was deeply involved in the intellectual worlds of Azerbaijan, Iran, and Ottoman Turkey, where he is identified with progressive *jadid* movements that championed universal secular education, women's rights, and alphabet reform. He wrote poetry and philosophical tracts in Farsi, but is most famous for his six plays, works of realist social satire written in vernacular Azerbaijani. As Swietochowski writes, Axundzade's "lyrical poetry was written in Persian, but his works that carry messages of social importance are written in the language of the people of his native land, which he called Turki" (28). Axundzade was one of the intellectuals who broke the hold of Farsi over the intellectual life of Azerbaijan and paved the way for vernacular Azerbaijani to be used as a written literary language. Axundzade's plays are humorous and didactic, aimed at combating superstition and supporting secular education and women's rights. His plays also champion the folk wisdom and natural good sense of the Azerbaijani and use a colorful vernacular full of useful and witty proverbs. The trend toward the vernacular indicated a change of audience and a change of purpose for literature: while Farsi was intended for the elite, Axundzade's plays were

written in Azerbaijani so that they had "a wide popular appeal and could reach the illiterate" (Altstadt 52).

In the 19th century however, the literary flow was not only from the elite/literate to the non-elite/illiterate classes; intelligentsiya poets also drew language and inspiration from *aşiq* and folk poetry. As in many societies in the 19th century, an awakened national identity was combined with a search by intellectuals to re-discover that identity in vernacular folklore and oral literature (Olson 23). In the 19th century, *aşiq* poetry and music attracted the attention of Azerbaijani and Russian intellectuals alike and began to appear in print (Eldarova 3). At the same time, *aşiq* bards were themselves responding to the currents of the times.

The *aşiq* tradition combines both the learning of a large canon of historical poetry and dastan, but also includes composing new poetry based on current events, thus preserving the past while commenting on the present. *Aşıqs* would compose new songs to sing in performance and also compose spontaneously at *deyişmə*, verbal dueling contests. Although associated with rural regions, *aşiq* arts were not practiced in isolated environments. While most of them were indeed rural and many were illiterate, *aşıqs* were deeply influenced by the intellectual currents of the times and by the written poetry of the 19th century (which was mostly recited aloud in *məclis*es rather than printed). In fact, because they traveled frequently to multicultural urban centers such as Tabriz, Yerevan, Derbend and Tbilisi, *aşıqs* were often multilingual and exchanged ideas with *aşıqs*, poets and others at social gatherings. Before the 20th century, *aşıqs* were very probably the primary conduits of ideas from the urban/written/classical culture to the rural/oral/vernacular culture.

Poetry of 19th century *aşıqs*, such as of the renowned *Aşiq Ələsgər* of Göycə,

shows the same kind of reactions to new social currents as in the works of Axundzade and other progressives: opposition to the oppression of the poor by the rich, protest against the hypocrisy of religious and government bureaucrats, and calls for an indigenous moral code based on traditional wisdom. However, instead of Axundzade's enthusiastic multiculturalism, Ələsgər's works express a populist national consciousness with patriotic poems praising the Azerbaijani people, landscape, and language. All of these new social themes are present in Ələsgər's collected works side by side with the more traditional lyric and metaphysical themes of love, nature, longing for God, and reflection on the falseness of the ephemeral world (Ələsgər 2003).

The 19th century also provides the first written records of women *aşıqs* by folklorists, and the first publications of their poetry (Təhmasib 220). From 19th century sources it is evident that the women's *aşiq* tradition was not separate from the men's; they had the same repertoires, same training, and they performed together at the same *məclis*es. *Deyişmə* (verbal dueling) between male and female *aşıqs* was a popular form (as it is today), and often were written down by enthusiastic onlookers. The same is true for women poets who were involved in elite *məclis*es devoted to classical poetry written in *aruz* meter in Farsi or classical Azerbaijani, such as Khurşid Banu Natəvan (Cəfərzadə 65), and indicates that the *məclis* tradition itself inspired artistic dialogue, as well as being an accepted venue for men and women to interact in artistic exchange.

Bəsti Bayraməli qızı was born circa 1840 in the Azerbaijani village of Løy in Kəlbəcər and lived there until she passed away in 1936. As a young woman she apprenticed in the *aşiq* arts, then joined the Qurban Bulağı *Məclis* which was made up of the best *aşıqs* of the Western region,

including *Aşiq Ələsgər* and *Ağdabanlı Qurban*. The *məclis* system put *aşıqs* into a performance collective and was also a school for the arts — they would perform together, engage in verbal dueling, and comment on each other's performances. *Aşiq Bəsti* traveled and worked professionally as an *aşiq* in the Kəlbəcər-Göycə-Şəmki region. She was known to have been accomplished in all *aşiq* arts, which include *saz* playing, singing, telling *dastan* and competing in verbal duels, and was declared a master (*ustad*) who trained six (male) apprentices (*Pirsultanlı* 3-4). Her poetry and legends about her life have come through time not just in writing but also through the oral narrative of the Kəlbəcər region, and were not printed until 1969 when *Pirsultanlı* recorded and published them in the collection *Lale* (*Pirsultanlı* June 16, 2006, recorded interview). There is still a wealth of oral narrative that circulates about her life and poetry, and *aşıqs* from Kəlbəcər still include her works in their repertoire, as I witnessed at a performance at the Gəncə Union of *Aşıqs* in 2006. As the *ashiqs* explained to me, they were internal refugees from Kəlbəcər, having been displaced in the first Karabakh war (1992–1994), and sang the songs of *Ashiq Bəsti* to keep a connection with their homeland (June 15, 2006, fieldwork video).

The story of *Aşiq Bəsti*'s life as told by the people of her region is perhaps a mix of life and legend, as is common with the life stories of *aşiq* bards. It is told that when *Aşiq Bəsti* was a young woman, she was in love with a shepherd (whom she names *Xançoban*, “King shepherd” in her poetry). According to the legend, she watched as her beloved was murdered by a powerful rich man in front of her eyes, after which her eyes became blind from weeping; it is also said that the trauma of this event drove her to become an *aşiq*, traveling to sing of her sorrow so plaintively that there is a saying “when *Aşiq Bəsti*

sang even the rocks would cry” (Pirsultanlı 45). Famous for her mellifluous voice and quick wittedness in verbal dueling, she performed for many years at weddings and other məclis (gatherings of aşığı and poets that were also public performances) in the regions of Kəlbəcər, Göycə and neighboring Gəncə, Şəmkir, Qazax, and Qarabağ, often performing together with other members of the Qurban Bulağı Məclis. When I asked her relatives how a blind woman managed to travel around like that, they explained that she was accompanied by her brother, whose role in the family was, it seems, to support her aşığı career (June 18 2006, interview).

Much of Aşığı Bəsti’s poetry mourns the loss of Xançoban, the ephemeral nature of life, and the fickleness of fate. While these themes are traditional to all aşığı verse, her interpretation of them is strikingly original. Her language is vernacular Azerbaijani, strongly informed by the vocabulary and idiom of folk poetry. At the same time, her work is very much within the legacy of the professional aşığı tradition, and aşığı poetry often integrates nature, stressing a strong integration between states of nature and the self — for example, the image of fog on a mountain is often used as indicating that the poet is experiencing sorrow (Təhmasib 57). Aşığı Bəsti’s poems frequently use flowers as images, such as in the poem “Lale” (Tulips), in which red tulips remind her of the bloody shirt of the murdered Xançoban (Pirsultanlı 2002: 157) or in this *gəraylı* (verse form made up of 8 syllable quatrains), “Bənövşələr” (Violets):

*O yar gəzən oylaqlarda,
Bir də açdı bənövşələr.
Səpələndi dağa-daşa,
Yaldan aşdı bənövşələr.
Yaralı bülbüllər kimi,
Kola düşdü bənövşələr.*

*In the fields where the beloved has wandered,
They have bloomed again, the violets.*

*Sprinkled among the mountain rocks
They have climbed over the mountain’s crest,
Like wounded nightingales, the violets.*

*Yarəb, o Tutqu çayını,
Necə keçdi bənövşələr?
Bir quş kimi yoxa çıxdı,
Hara uçdu bənövşələr?
Bəsti, Xançobanı kimi,
Vaxtsız köçdü bənövşələr.*

*They have fallen under the bushes, the violets.
Good Lord, how did they cross
The Tutgu river, the violets?
They have vanished suddenly like a bird.
Where have they flown to, the violets?
Oh Bəsti, like my Xançoban,
They have passed away too soon, the violets.
(Pirsultanlı 50)*

Reading this poem, one can almost feel the ephemeral coming and going of spring violets as they move through the poem, blooming, falling and vanishing. In the first line, Bəsti makes the association between her beloved and the violets, the echoes of his now absent footsteps. The entire poem expresses movement with a series of rhyming verbs that fall powerfully at the poems caesura (the syllables of the *gəraylı* scan 4+4) in line of the second hemstitch of each beyt (couplet), which contrasts or fulfills the idea of the first line; *açdı, aşdı, düşdü, keçdi, uçdu, köçdü*. This sound sonority of this series of verbs, each two syllable, like a heartbeat or a footstep, gives a ritual rhythmic tone almost like an incantation, while expressing the pounding, relentless march of time — opened, climbed, fell, crossed, flew, passed away. The rhyme is strengthened further by the grammatical ending for the definite past (di/du), which gives even a stronger sense of finality. The ending of each two line beyt with the repeating *bənövşələr* (violets) changes the flower from a cheerful herald of spring in the first line to an endless, repeating, sorrowful reflection on mortality:

“they have passed away too soon, the violets.”

This poem expresses a connection between the inevitable progression of nature and the painful awareness of time and loss. There is a cruelty to the violets’ speedy demise, when after just crossing the mountain top, they fall “like wounded nightingales”. At that point they lose their flower qualities and turn to birds, surprising Bəsti, who claims “Good Lord, how did they cross/ The Tutgu river, the violets? They have vanished suddenly like a bird.” Perhaps this is a transformation from matter to spirit, but to Bəsti on the ground, all she can see is that they have vanished. Connecting to a tradition of poetry that often mourns the fleeting nature of life, Bəsti’s composition is unusually powerful. Each short line crafted as an interlocked combination of sound and idea, the poem is cut like a diamond, with no superfluous words. It is no wonder that Pirsultanlı called Bəsti “one of the most important of all aşiq poets” (October 21, 2005, interview). Bəsti’s poems use originality and exquisite craft to expand the intellectual force of a tradition, all the while staying very strictly within its confines.

Ashiq Bəsti’s focus on the murder of Xançoban is personal, but it is also social, concerning the oppression of the poor rural classes by cruel and powerful landowning classes, a theme that was important to the urban intelligentsiya such as Axundzade as well. Ashiq Bəsti was also concerned with the problems of the lives of rural women, who were vulnerable to being forced into arranged marriages and into being subordinated to men and older women in their families, as well as facing the dangers of childbirth and the tragedy of high infant mortality. Although she does not sing about these issues directly, she encodes them into folkloric tropes, such as in her poem *Gəlin Daş* (The Bride Stone).

Ashiq Bəsti’s works often directly incorporate local myths and topographies, such as in this poem on the subject of a rock formation called the *Gəlin Daş* (The Bride Stone) located in Western Azerbaijan (gəlin is a title given to women that means bride/daughter-in-law). One legend has it that when a young woman was climbing the mountain with her baby, a strong wind came and blew her baby away. “Fate!” she cried, “do not allow the wind to take my baby out of my hands and separate us! Let us both turn to stone together!” and they did (Abdulla 162). In another version the bride is to be married to a man she does not love, and asks to turn to stone so she can be eternally faithful to her real beloved. Both legends admire the faithfulness and rock-like endurance of a woman’s love. Bəsti’s “*Daş ay gəlin*” (Stone, oh Bride) concentrates on the sorrow of the legendary bride:

*Görməyəydim bu dağlarda,
Haray, səni, kaş, ay gəlin!
Söylə, sənə kim qarğadı,
Niyə oldun daş, ay gəlin?
Hardan bilim haralısın,
Dağ görmüsən yaralısın?
İsmətlisən, həyalısın.
Özü qələm qaş, ay gəlin.*

*If only I hadn't seen you in the mountains,
Oh bride!
Tell me, who put a curse on you?
How did you turn into stone, oh bride?
How shall I know where you are from,
Did you have such sorrow in life that you
are still in pain?
You are faultless, honorable, You are a
beauty, oh bride.*

*Qoymaz burden dərdsiz kəçəm,
Durusu qəm, baxışı qəm.
Ağlar Bəsti taləyi kəm.
Durmaz gözdə yaş, ay gəlin.*

*She would not let me pass by this place
without sorrow,*

*Her bearing is mournful, her gaze is
mournful.
Bəsti weeps for her [the bride's]
wretched fate,
The tears flow from the eyes, oh bride.
(Pirsultanlı 31)*

In this poem Bəsti interweaves legend and life. She humanizes the Stone Bride by showing interest in the person she was before, where she was from, how she met her fate, and by weeping for her. By recognizing the real human condition behind the myth, she gives voice to the suffering of the many real women whose lives have been ‘turned to stone’ by sadness. Bəsti connects the real and legendary worlds in a way that is unique to her, with poignancy and profound simplicity. Instead of comparing herself to literary figures like Leyla and Majnun, she brings local legends to earth, and humanizes them.

The poem “Qurban olum” (May I be a sacrifice) is an example of a *mürvəti gərayli* which features 8 syllable line in a question and answer form, and is rare in aşiq poetry, though more common in folk traditions (Həkimov 417). This poem shows Bəsti acting in a role very important to aşiqs, that of stressing geographical and cultural bonds in the local communities through which they travel:

*Söylə Löydənmi gəlirsən,
Yollarına qurban olum.
Ağçınqıldan gül dərdinmi?
Əllərinə qurban olum.
Daş bulaqdan su içdinmi?
Dillərinə qurban olum.
Bəzənibmi tamaşalı?*

*Tell me if you are going to Löy,
May I be a sacrifice for your roads.
Did you pick a flower from the Ağçınqıl tree?
May I be a sacrifice for your hands.
Did you drink water from the rock spring?
May I be a sacrifice for your tongue.*

*Çöllərinə qurban olum. Açıbmı maral çiçəyi?
Güllərinə qurban olum.
Tərtərim qan-qan deyirmi?
Sellərinə qurban olum.
Dağlara bahar gəlibmi?
İllərinə qurban olum.*

*Did it resemble a beautiful landscape?
May I be a sacrifice for its wild fields.
Did the deer-flower bloom?
May I be a sacrifice for its flowers.
Did the Tatar river get crazy and flood?
May I be a sacrifice for its flood.
Has spring come to the mountains?
May I be a sacrifice to its years.
(Pirsultanlı 51)*

Again, this poem features the repetition of idea and sound with variations that move through the poem. In this case, the longing is for her homeland. Each couplet describes a specific feature of the land and its people. The poem expresses the geographic and community identification of a rural person of the 19th century, focusing on what makes it unique — the deer-flower, the Ağçınqıl tree, the Tərtər river — and on the community of people that share this locality, those that have walked its roads and drank from its springs. Unlike Axundzade’s transnational, multilingual, multiregional (he lived variously in Azerbaijan, Iran, and Tiflis) identifications, Bəsti’s identification is carefully defined and rooted. At the end of each beyt, she ends with “qurban olam”, “may I be a sacrifice”. The idiom “qurban olum” is used very frequently in colloquial Azerbaijani speech and folklore, and the very phrase itself denotes being part of the community, and adherence to a prime foundation of Azerbaijani adət (way of life), the willingness to be a “sacrifice” for one’s family, loved ones, kin, and community. Thus the repetition here at the end of each beyt stressed Bəsti’s belonging, and her affection for her place and her community.

Bəsti's poems are still performed by today's aşıqs. One that is popular in the repertoire of contemporary women aşıqs is the qoşma (verse of 11 syllable quatrains) "Bu Dünya" (This World) which describes the fickleness of the world, a theme that is very recurrent in the written and verbal poetry of Azerbaijan. When I asked Gülərə Azafılı why she includes this poem in her repertoire when there are many others on this theme, she told me "This one is the best. Everyone feels as if it was written for them. It addresses all the unfairness that happens to everyone" (July 15, 2005, interview).

*Mələykə boyludur, şirin ləhcəli,
Əzəldən tamaşa olan bu dünya.
Qoca cadugərđi aldadar səni,
Cavanlıq donunda qalan bu dünya.
Qananı eylənib talesiz, baxtsiz.
Əyibdi qəddini, qocaldıb vaxtsiz,
Çoxlarını qoyub eyvan-otaqsız,
Vərlinin dərdinə qalan bu dünya.
Qəmdən pay götürdüm, nalədən qismət,
Görmədim bir ləzzət, çəkdim əziyyət,
Canda eşq atəşi, dildə məhəbbət,
Bəstini odlara salan bu dünya.*

*It looks like an angel with a sweet voice,
It has been like a spectacle since the
creation, this world.
It is an old sorcerer who will deceive you,
Dressed as a youth, this world.
It left those who fell for it without fortune
or luck,
It bent them with age, made them old
before their time
It left many without house or home
It only cares for the problems of the rich,
this world.
I got my share of sorrow, from moans
my fate,
I have not had any pleasure, only torture,
With burning love in my soul and loving
words on my tongue,
It threw Bəsti into flames, this world.
"Bu Dünya" by Aşiq Bəsti.
(Pirsultanlı 2001, 31)*

Conclusion

Aşiq Bəsti was a remarkable Azerbaijani oral poet and deserves more study and translation so that her work can be seen comparatively as global literary heritage. While sung poetry is often categorized as "folklore" that is not as original or valuable as written literature, this article has sought to demonstrate that Aşiq Bəsti's poetry is not only original but also valuable as lyric poetry that expresses profound feelings of love, loss, and connection to homeland.

Western studies of epic arts exclude the possibility that women could be performing bards; as Albert Lord writes in his seminal *Singer of Tales*, "this is a man's world" (14). Yet records of women aşıqs of the 19th century show women that are embedded in the tradition, performing in the same məclis with men, and furthermore putting their own unique stamp on the art by their creativity in adding their own works to centuries of aşiq poetry. The poems quoted above are only a small collection of her works, which range on many more themes than I have been able to discuss here; for example, Bəsti also has verse that celebrates the beauties of the world, not just its sorrows, and there are many anecdotes about her quick-wittedness and sense of humor in deyişmə that round out the picture of her as a human figure. Like M. F. Axundzade and Aşiq Ələsgər, as mentioned above, Aşiq Bəsti participated in the progressive movements of their times, reacting against the power and injustice of the rich over the poor.

The aşiq tradition of the 19th century shows a cultural milieu in which rural women who had mastered the arts had opportunities to enter into creative dialogue both with other aşıqs and with the larger discourses that were affecting their society. The aşiq profession shows a vehicle embedded within Azerbaijani tradition that gives both men and women

from rural regions not only the opportunity to have a voice listened to and respected by a wide public, but also a verbal encoding system to carry their poetry through time in the memories of their community.

Through translation, study and dialogue, the oral poetry of ashıqs such as Bəsti can begin to be analyzed and compared as part of the artistic heritage of the world.

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«АШЫҚ БƏСТИ ƏН АЙТҚАН КЕЗДЕ, ТІПТІ ТАСТАР ДА ЖЫЛАЙТЫН ЕДІ»: ƏЗІРБАЙЖАНДЫҚ АШЫҚ БƏСТИ МҰРАСЫ

Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеуде Əзірбайжанның музыкалық-поэтикалық бардалық дәстүрі-ашық өнерінің шебері əйел Ашық Бəстидің (1836–1936) əндері қарастырылады. Көзі көрмеген Ашық Бəсти өнер көрсету үшін көп саяхаттап қана қоймай, сонымен қатар ХІХ ғасырдағы Əзірбайжанның əйгілі орындаушылық ұжымдарының бір бөлігі болды. Ол шəкірт даярлайтын ашық шебері мәртебесіне жетті, оның əндері мұра болып қалады және бүгінгі күнге дейін Əзірбайжанда орындалып келеді. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты – Ашық Бəстидің шығармашылық өмірі мен мұрасының маңыздылығын ашу.

Əзірбайжандық ашық өнері – ХVІ ғасырдан бері үздіксіз орындалатын, бірақ əлі де жаһандық контекстте зерттелмеген жанды ауызша баяндаудың бір түрі. Зерттеуде бұл суреткер аудармамен таныстырады және салыстырмалы əлем əдебиетін талқылауға ашық өнерін енгізуге жол ашады.

Бұл зерттеу материалдары ғылыми қолжазбалар мен мұрағаттардан, сондай-ақ қазір өмір сүріп жатқан ашықтар мен фольклортанушылардың сұхбаттарынан алынған. Қолданылатын əдістерге тақырыпты терең зерттеу, тарихи контексті талдау, салыстырмалы əдеби талдау және егжей-тегжейлі оқу жатады. Зерттеу нəтижелері дәстүрлі жанрда жұмыс істейтін ауылдық суретші əйелдің шығармашылық өміріне терезе ашады. Талқылау тарихи және мәдени кезеңді белгілейді, содан кейін Ашық Бəстидің өмірі мен мұрасына мұқият қарайды, оның бірнеше өлеңдерін мұқият оқиды. Қорытындыда Ашық Бəсти поэзиясының жеке шығармашылық көрінісі ретінде де, қоғамдық қозғалыстардың бір бөлігі ретінде көп мəнділігіне назар аударылады.

Тірек сөздер: Əзірбайжан ашығы, түркі халықтарының ауызша баяндауы, бард өнері, əзірбайжан фольклоры, əзірбайжан музыкасы, əзірбайжан мәдениетіндегі гендер, ХІХ ғасырдағы Əзірбайжан.

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«КОГДА ПЕЛА АШУГ БАСТИ, ДАЖЕ КАМНИ ПЛАКАЛИ»: НАСЛЕДИЕ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОЙ ПОЭТЕССЫ-АШУГА БАСТИ

Аннотация. В данном исследовании рассматривается песенная поэзия Ашуга Басти (1836–1936), женщины-мастера ашугского искусства, музыкально-поэтической бардовской традиции Азербайджана. Ашуг Басти, будучи слепой, много путешествовала с выступлениями и вошла в плеяду самых известных ашугских коллективов Азербайджана XIX века. Она достигла статуса мастера ашуг (уstad), обучавшего учеников; ее песни передаются по наследству и до сих пор исполняются в Азербайджане. Цель данной статьи – раскрыть важность деятельности и творческого наследия Ашуга Басти.

Искусство ашугов в Азербайджане – это форма живого устного повествования, которое непрерывно продолжается с XVI века, однако еще не имеет глобального научного изучения. Настоящее исследование знакомит с творчеством поэтессы в переводе, открывая путь к интеграции искусства ашугов для дискуссий в сравнительной мировой литературе.

Материалы для исследования почерпнуты из различных научных публикаций и архивов, а также из интервью с современными ашугами и фольклористами. Используемые методы включают всестороннее исследование темы, историко-контекстный анализ, сравнительный литературный анализ и детализированное чтение. Результатом исследования стал обзор творческого пути сельской поэтессы, работавшей в традиционном поэтическом жанре. В дискуссии разворачивается исторический и культурный контекст, на основе которого изучается жизнь и творческое наследие Ашуга Басти на примере ее избранных стихотворений. В заключении статьи автор акцентирует внимание читателя на многогранной ценности поэзии Ашуга Басти как в отношении творческого выражения личности, так и в плане широкого социального значения.

Ключевые слова: азербайджанский ашуг, устное повествование тюркских народов, искусство бардов, азербайджанский фольклор, азербайджанская музыка, гендер в азербайджанской культуре, Азербайджан XIX века.

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