

Armenophilia among the Azerbaijani Intelligentsia

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1 Introduction

Despite the rivalry and suspicion which too often characterized the relationship between Caucasian Muslims and their Armenian neighbors, the intelligentsia of the former community often found themselves expressing admiration for characteristics they perceived in the latter. They saw in the Armenians energy, industry, patriotism, a thirst for learning, and liberated women, while they saw passivity, lethargy, ignorance, and enslaved women in their own community. Soviet scholarship saw in this a spirit of “internationalism;”¹ the reality is more complicated. This phenomenon could instead be classified as a manifestation of a profound inferiority complex and as an alliance of the assimilated elite of the Caucasian Muslim community with their class brothers among the Christians. In this paper, we simply illustrate the phenomenon and leave a discussion of its significance for later.

2 *Äkinji*

Äkinji, or The Farmer, was published between 1875 to 1879 in Baku by Häsän bey Zärdabı.² This period represented what might be called the first wave of the Caucasian Muslim awakening, and was associated with such luminaries as Fäth ‘Äli Ahundof and Säyyid ‘Äzim Şırvanı, both of whom contributed to this journal.

It should be pointed out that, like Ahundof and Säyyid ‘Äzim, Häsän bey Zärdabı was loyal to the Russian government. Even during the war with the Ottomans, he referred to the Tsarist troops as “our” troops. On the other hand, although his references to the Tsar were always correct, he never went out of his way to praise him. It seems that, on the whole, he felt that the road to prosperity for the Caucasian Muslims went through St. Petersburg and not through Istanbul. Moreover, he had cordial relations with the Tsar’s governor in Baku, who, in turn, actively helped him in establishing *Äkinji*.

Häsän bey showed a keen and sympathetic interest in the Ottoman reforms, *Äkinji* having been published during the high Tanzimat period. But, while the popular Ottoman Muslim response to general European interference is reported, it is not given much importance, and of course the impact of Russia’s panslavic policies is given very short shrift.

Häsän bey generally looked with admiration on his Armenian neighbors. He was impressed by their philanthropy, particularly regarding education. Thus, he reported how the Baku Armenians opened a theater to raise money to send poor children to St. Petersburg to study.³ Another article

¹Source.

²For more information on *Äkinji*, the reader is referred to E. Siegel *Äkinji and Azerbaijani Self-Definition* (to be published) and the sources therein.

³News Brief section, *Äkinji*, II:9 (May 13/26, 1876).

reported that 4000 rubles had been raised to form a children's literacy society.⁴ A letter from a reader, in response to a letter from Aḥundov, who was touting his pet project of alphabet reform as a panacea for Islam's backwardness,⁵ had the following to say about the Muslim lack of public spirit:⁶

... [W]hat is it which has sapped the Islamic community's strength? ... I consider it necessary to give an example: The Armenians living in Badkuba [Baku] have a society which raises money, some six or seven thousand rubles, with which they hire a teacher and open a school for men and for women and a printing house on which they print schoolbooks to give for free to the poor and at a low price to the wealthy, and now they talk of printing a gazette and a journal.

Some days ago, one of the Armenian clerics preached to encourage the people to increase their contributions to this society, and the people gathered 500 rubles on the spot. A people who have such solidarity (*uttufaq*) will progress from day to day.

... Your servant can name a hundred Muslims in Badkuba who each have an annual income of 3 to 15 thousand rubles, and by whom a contribution of a hundred rubles would not be missed... [T]he chief obstacle to our becoming educated is our lack of solidarity...

Again, an *Ākinji* regular, commenting on the lack of qualified teachers who can teach in the people's language, wrote,⁷

Take a look at our Armenian neighbors and how they learn. In every city of the Caucasus, they have a school on par with a *gymnasium*. They even have an academy in poor Yerevan. But we don't even have a single school to study in. Brothers! Don't forget that children are a people's hope...

During his last years, he wrote in his memoirs⁸ that he had great trouble inspiring a sense of public-spiritedness in the Muslim notables. He said that this was "because philanthropic work requires refinement and learning, and there is, alas, little of this among us Muslims." Rather, money is given to the *rawzehans*, who exert a baleful influence on the Muslims. He compared this situation with that prevailing among the Armenians who had

founded Benevolent Associations forty years ago. In those days, there were very few Armenians in Baku, no more than a few hundred. The Armenians native to Baku were about ten or fifteen families. Later, Armenians came as civil servants or as merchants. Even in those days, they were more literate than we. Some of them had graduated from universities. One of them, Dr. Rostamyan, drafted a constitution for a Benevolent Society and, with a few others, presented a petition to found one, which was granted. They then founded the society and invited all the Armenians in Baku, opened an accounting book, and gathered money... Everyone was to bring a certain sum and no one said that he would not pay it or was no able to afford it...

In those days, there were three Qarabagh Armenian milkmen in Baku... Two of them went on to become millionaires. The third, Karapet, was a zealous, patriotic

⁴News Brief section, *Ākinji*, II:10 (May 27/June 9, 1876).

⁵Unsigned letter, "Māktubat," *Ākinji*, III:2 (January 18/31, 1877).

⁶Mühämmäd Täqi Šırvanı, "Māktubat," *Ākinji*, III:3 (February, 1877).

⁷Äsgär Gorani, "Māktubat," *Ākinji*, III:11 (May 26/June 8, 1877).

⁸*Häyat*, I:107 (November 25/December 8, 1905) and I:115 (December 8/21, 1905). I have taken the quotations from *Häyat* from Z. B. Goyushov, *Häsän bey Zärdabi: Seçilmış Äsarları* (Azärbayjan Dowlät Näşriyyatı, Baku, 1960).

man and died a milkman. When the meeting to found the Benevolent Association was convened, this Karapet heard about it and came and tied his cow to the door, and they brought a seat for him. They made way for him, stepping back. He asked Rostamyan what they were going to do with this money. He replied that they wanted to open schools for poor and orphaned Armenians.

The Armenian milkman became very agitated, removed a leather purse from his clothes, and declared to Rostamyan, “I consider all Armenian children to be my own and very much want them to learn to read. In the morning, when I milk my cow, I see them going to school with their books under their arms and am very glad. So the money I have been saving in my leather purse for some years I am donating to this Benevolent Society,” a sum which amounted to a thousand rubles. The assembled Armenians called God to grace this milkman, but prayed that the houses of his millionaire former colleagues would be destroyed.

In contrast to this, when Ḥāsān bey tried, in 1871, to found a Benevolent Society in Baku and got permission from the authorities to have it set up, even those who petitioned the authorities would not help him. Finally, a meeting was held in the home of Mullah Jāvad Aḥund, the chief Islamic judge of Baku. The leading lights of Baku Muslim society were invited to the meeting to help. He reported that Zāyn ül-‘Abidin Täqiyev spoke at length about the aims of the society.

But when the word money was mentioned, the hajis became upset. One of them said, “This good deed requires someone to pray for its wellbeing. I hope that you will consider me that person,” and got up and left. Another haji said that he had to relieve himself and got up and left. These worthies one by one bore the honor of their presence away from us. . . . I went home and could not eat a crust of bread by day or sleep a wink by night thinking about our unhappy Muslims. Brothers, compare ourselves with our Armenian neighbors!

A comparison of newspapers, another index of culture, yielded similar results. In an editorial, Ḥāsān bey deplores the lack of interest in newspapers among the Caucasian Muslims:⁹

. . . [E]ven our Armenian neighbors have ten gazettes and three journals. Before *Ākinji* was founded, we had neither one.

. . . [O]ur Georgian neighbors have a few gazettes, but now, in Kutais, they have formed a society and gathered five thousand rubles to print a weekly gazette. . . .

A letter from Moscow by an *Ākinji* regular, commenting on how closely the news of the war with the Ottomans is being followed by the Russians, remarked,¹⁰

It is amazing that, although there are millions of Muslims in the Caucasus, there is but a single gazette, and it is not circulating, while there are about a half million Armenians and they have four gazettes and four journals. This isn’t the fault of the villagers; I spoke with many of them last summer, they are ready to scrape together the three rubles needed to purchase *Ākinji*. But what would be the use; the villagers have never heard of the mail and don’t know anything about how to receive a gazette. The fault lies with our bey’s boys, who receive the gazette but won’t distribute it to them. . . .

⁹Editorial, *Ākinji*, II:14 (July 25/August 19, 1876). In what follows, a “gazette,” according to Ḥāsān bey’s definition, is a newspaper which cover the day’s news, while a “journal” is defined to be a book-like magazine which comes out less frequently.

¹⁰Āsgār Gorani, “Mäktubat,” *Ākinji*, II:24 (December 22, 1876/January 4, 1876).

[T]hey often tell those who are gathering funds to build a *gymnasium* in Qarabagh, “What are we giving money for? Even our own kids don’t know how to read. Should we contribute money so that the sons of the people might read and become humans?”

3 *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*

Mülla Näsir üd-Din of Tbilisi occupies pride of place in the formation of Azerbaijani consciousness.¹¹ It embraced progressive bourgeois Western ideas, often to the point of completely idealizing the West. In addition, its editor, Mirza Jähl Mühämmedqülzadä, was on good terms with the Armenian community, having had close Armenian friends from his youth¹² and a knowledge of the Armenian language.¹³ Among other things, he was a something of a disciple of the Armenian-Iranian reformer Mirza Malkom Khan, whom he called the “irreplaceable litterateur.”¹⁴ In one instance, he even referred to him in an Armenianized form.¹⁵ During a round of fighting between Muslims and Armenians, his house, which was located in the Christian quarters, was protected by a band of unknown Armenian beneficiaries.¹⁶

Mülla Näsir üd-Din provides the clearest expression of armenophilia I have found in the Caucasian Muslim press. The following are some examples:

In one article,¹⁷ the author recollects a visit he’d paid to a village in Yerevan which was half Muslim and half Armenian. An Armenian boy was reading a book; a Muslim boy was tormenting a cat. The visitor saw an Armenian sitting under a mulberry tree eating bread while a priest was haranguing him:

“The Armenian people have three darling children in this world: their homeland, their nation, and their language. No matter how much we sacrifice for these three dear children, whether to the Ottoman Hamidiye armies and Kurds or to Russia’s Galisi (?). . . , the survival of the Armenian nation is inviolable.”

After the priest finished, I heard Aḥund Qürban ‘Alı. This mullah read the following:¹⁸

“Chapter Four. If someone sees a blood-cupping in his dream, he will never suffer any disasters or illnesses in his lifetime.”

Meanwhile, the priest continued:

“Oh, my Armenian brothers! Since the creation of the world, the Armenian people have suffered at the hands of various nations. [They] have trampled it under their horses’ hooves. Just as the Armenian was at the point of death, he called out, “Homeland, homeland, nation, *hayraniq*.” Oh, my brothers, if we are ready to sacrifice for our nation, for our language, for our homeland, let all the peoples of the world attack us, we will be able to stand before them and protect our language and our homeland. Long

¹¹The reader is referred to a series of articles by E. Siegel on the issue of *Mülla Näsir üd-Din* in a series of talks presented, in particular, at the Middle East Studies Association, and which are being prepared for publication.

¹²Source.

¹³Source.

¹⁴Mülla Näsir üd-Din [Mirza Jälil], “*Bızım İslärimiz*,” *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*, II:27 (July 24/August 7, 1907).

¹⁵Source.

¹⁶Source.

¹⁷Laghlaghı, “*Aḥund ulä Keşış Va’zi*,” *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*, I:14 (July 7/20, 1906).

¹⁸It is significant that this is in Persian. The Azerbaijani intelligentsia saw in Iranian culture the source of many of the vices they were combating.

live the Armenian nation, which sacrifices for the sake of the homeland! Long live our brothers who have been martyred for the nation! *Getse, getse hayreniq!*"

Mullah Qürban 'Äh was telling the villagers: "Sitting under a tree or by the water and eating a lot is not good because twins [*sic*], jinns, and devils will do people harm. One must not go to a graveyard or a public bath on Wednesday or Saturday or *tak gunu*, for on those days, the jinns and demons gather at the graveyards and public baths and have a party, these days being their festivals; if they see people, they will do them harm. If something happens to anyone because of this, let him come to me so that I can write the 'thousand castles' prayer."

Another example is the following passage:¹⁹ The author began by observing that "People who are away from Qarabagh for various reasons express their love for their compatriots and their regret over their plight [the famine that gripped the province in the wake of the Muslim-Armenian fighting] in different ways." He then quoted a Qarabagh Armenian in *Novoye Vremya* talking about Shusha:

Ah, my brothers, curse that day and hour I left my homeland. How could I not have known that you would be suffering so? Why am I not there, to help my dear brothers as best I could and console the sufferers. Ah! When I write these words, I weep like a child. I can wait no more, I will return to my homeland on the first boat.

He next quotes an Iranian prince, Seyfollah Qajar, who wrote the following in *Tifliski Listok*, in response to an article which reported that one the houses which had been destroyed in the fighting between Muslims and Armenians had belonged to a prince from his family:

I was afraid because of this news. . . and so made it known that, after the prince's father, Bähräm Mirza, died in 1884, his children began, gradually, to leave Qarabagh, each to his own place. For there is nothing pleasurable in Shusha to keep a man there. . . . From that time to this, the princes utterly fled their homeland to enter the Russian military service. There remained in Shusha a family from each of the princes, but they, too, at the outset of the Armenian-Muslim war, fled to live in Vladiqafqaz. The princes' houses were empty. They were burned down and then used a bases for fighting. What is this to us?

The Armenians' attachment to their language is also held up as an example the Muslims might want to follow. Mirza Jälil ridiculed²⁰ how as soon as some Tabrizi comes to Tiflis, he fixes an "of" at the end of his name, or how Fatima becomes "Fatya" and Häsän, "Gasanka" and Münävvar, "Varya." This contrasts with the Armenians, who would never converse with each other in Russian the way educated Muslims are pleased to.

The energy and enthusiasm which Armenians displayed in helping their own people was also admired. Famine gripped parts of the Caucasus in which the two communities had been fighting each other. The Armenian community, particularly their wealthy classes, rallied to feed the starving Armenians, while the Muslim notables, according to *Mülla Näsır üd-Din*, firmly sat on their hoarded wealth. In one article,²¹ Mirza Jähil gave a painful description of the plight of the starving Muslims in Qarabagh and Yerevan and the negligence of their wealthy brothers-in-faith. He then shifted gears and commented,

¹⁹Hop-hop [Sabır], "*Vätän Mähäbätü*," *Mülla Näsır üd-Din*, I:18 (August 4/17, 1906).

²⁰Müll Näsır üd-Din [Mirza Jälil], "*Meymunlar*," *Mülla Näsır üd-Din*, II:31 (November 3/16, 1906).

²¹Mülla Näsır üd-Din [Mirza Jälil], "*Qarnıyoghunlar*," *Mülla Näsır üd-Din*, II:36 (December 8/21, 1906).

[I]f a Muslim is called an Armenian, he considers it an insult. But the Armenians of Yava are gathering and sending aid to their brothers in the Caucasus.

... Some of [the wealthy Muslims] can buy all of Yava. Who are the starving? They are [the wealthy Muslims'] subjects. In Yerevan, Bähş 'Äh owns thirty two villages. In Nakhichevan, there is a landlord who has an annual income of thirty or forty thousand rubles.

He repeated this point in a later article.²² Concluding an editorial condemning the wealthy Muslims' callous disregard for their starving coreligionists, he remarked:

[D]o not forget that we Muslims, whenever we talk about prayer and humanity, say to each other, "Those poor Armenians, see what answer they will give God [on Judgement Day]."

But now in Zangezur, when the starving Muslims eagerly rush out to greet the wagons loaded with grain, these wagons of grain are being sent to the Armenians.

We are fine people; the Armenians are vile.

Again, in an editorial, Mirza Jähl declared,²³

[T]he unclean Armenians of Armavir last June bought one hundred thousand *puts* of flour for their starving brothers and by September it was sent to Ganja and was being distributed. But in Baku in October, with complete pomp, an aid commission was set up and, huffing and puffing, calling out "*Yallah!*", divining the future, determining which was the auspicious day, by April they were finally able to send to Zangezur five or six thousand *puts* of flour and sell each *put* to the poor for two rubles and ten kopeks.

The relative levels of culture of Armenian women and Muslim women also came in for an invidious comparison. In one piece,²⁴ Mirza Jähl reported overhearing a political discussion between two Armenian girls. One proposed to the other the following riddle: Why did the Austrian emperor, Franz Joseph, cancel his visit to Italy? The declared reason was that he was ill, but she wanted to know the real reason. Her friend thought about it and replied that she had read in a French newspaper published in Berlin that the Italian people had threatened trouble if the Emperor were to visit, and that this was the true reason and the answer to the riddle. When her friend heard this reply, she was so impressed she kissed her companion on the mouth and called out, "Ah, ah, did you hear that, *Hayastan?* Did you hear that, *hayrek?* Did you hear that, *yenkhavarik?* etc., etc." Mirza Jähl contrasted that with a childhood memory of an aunt who posed the following riddle: "One day his/her²⁵ father was fed up. He/She made him bald. He/She though an '*abbasi* was worth two *shahis*." His uncle's answer was, "A Muslim woman."

In another article advocating an end to the female seclusion,²⁶ he holds up "[o]ur neighboring Armenian women" as an example to be followed, that their going about unveiled has not corrupted their virtue:

²²Mülla Näsir üd-Din [Mirza Jähil], "*Qub-Bıabanlır,*" *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*, II:12 (March 24/April 7, 1907).

²³Mülla Näsir üd-Din [Mirza Jähil], "*Ajlar,*" *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*, II:25 (July 8/21, 1907). See also Supurgäsaqqal, "*Jäm'ıyyätü Heyrıyyä,*" *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*, II:49 (December 30, 1907/January 12, 1908), which makes the same point in contrasting the behavior of the wealthy Muslims and their Benevolent Society and that of the "unclean Armenians."

²⁴Mülla Näsir üd-Din [Mirza Jähil], "*Geçän Günlär,*" *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*, I:24 (September 15/18, 1906).

²⁵Gender neutral in Turkish.

²⁶Mülla Näsir üd-Din [Mirza Jähil], "*Ermänu vä Musälman 'Örätläri,*" *Mülla Näsir üd-Din*, II:20 (May 19/June 1, 1907).

No fair-minded person can say that Armenian women flirt with men other than their husbands.

... What Muslim with a conscience can say that Armenian women are shameless? What Muslim has heard and seen that Armenian women betray their husbands and show an inclination towards other men? What young handsome Muslim has been able to make the acquaintance of an Armenian woman? It goes without saying that there are badly raised and immoral women in every race. But in all fairness, see that, however many prostitutes there may be among the Armenian women, there are not fewer among Muslim women.

4 *Tazä Həyat*

*Tazä Həyat*²⁷ was edited by Həşim bey Vəzirov and bankrolled by the Baku oil millionaire and philanthropist Zäin ol-‘Abidın Taqıyev. Həşim bey postured as a defender of Islamic tradition against the modern Muslims (*Yäni Müsəlmanlar*). As a colleague recalls, *Tazä Həyat*:

... adopted an attitude of exaggerated traditionalism due on the one hand to the mentality of its publisher and those associated with him, and on the other, to his desire for vengeance on *Irshad*, which had assumed leadership of the liberal and progressive Azeri youth movement.

... [A] newspaper which, instead of encouraging its readers in the search of new social aspirations, ridiculed the rush towards liberalism, drawing a line between the “old” and “young” Muhammadans, could not fail to call down the thunder of the latter on the head of its editor, Hashim bey, who was accused not only of defending retrograde and pedantic ideas, but of attempting to divide the Azeri people against itself and cause dissensions among the élite.²⁸

Thus, in the first article of a series, “Islam, Progress, and Civilization,” Həşim bey raised the banner of belief in Islamic verities and declared that “aside from Islam and Islamism, there is no salvation, no hope, and all other faiths... , despite the respect we have for them, we consider all false and erroneous and hold that only Islam is the True Faith.”²⁹ He loudly bemoaned the fact that his enemies seized on such declarations to ridicule *Tazä Həyat* as “reactionary” and “religious fanatical” and “charlatan.” And, indeed, much of this was bluster, and served both as a shield to cover the editor’s own modernist beliefs and as a club with which to bash his rivals.

Thus, one of *Tazä Həyat*’s writers insisted that the Ottoman Sultan must be addressed with full respect because

400 million Muslims of different nations mention His Highness the Sultan with honor in the *hütbə* preached on Friday in their mosques. It is an obligation of prayer that one pray for Islam’s sultans during the *hütbə*. Moreover, exalted God has required, according to the noble Koranic verse, “Obey God and obey the Prophet and those who rule over you,”³⁰ that we nowhere speak of kings insultingly and disrespectfully, especially the emperor of Islam.³¹

²⁷For more on *Tazä Həyat*, the reader is referred to Evan Siegel’s “An Azerbaijani Poet’s Duel over Iranian Constitutionalism” (to be published) and the sources cited therein.

²⁸Jeyhoun bey Hajibeyli, “Origins of the National Press in Azerbaijan,” *Asiatic Review*, 27:90 (April 1931), p. 355.

²⁹Həşim bey, “İslamiyät ilä Täräqi vä Tämmäddüüdän,” *Tazä Həyat*, I:28 (May 10/23, 1907).

³⁰Koran, 4:59.

³¹Jäbbar Jiqayof, “*İrşadä Jävab*,” *Tazä Həyat*, I:9 (April 11/24, 1907).

The editor fully endorsed this view in a comment printed under the article.

Tazä Hāyat, not surprisingly, tended to be very suspicious and even hostile to the Armenians and their political aspirations.

For instance, the Armenian hand was seen behind an international conspiracy to discredit the Muslims. Thus, in one editorial,³² they were accused of raising the panislamist bogeyman to frighten the Europeans. The Armenians, according to this editorial, “have made us out to be unlearned, unproductive, vagrant, and unfree. Not only that, but, as best they can, they have often portrayed us to the government and the other nationalities as vile, miserable, savage, and apart from humanity.” An Armenian article on panislam³³ provoked a lengthy response by the editor which was serialized in the following issues of *Tazä Hāyat*. Hāšim bey declared that, rather than saying that the Armenians had suffered at the hands of the Ottomans, it would be more proper to say that the Armenians had confirmed their hostility to the Muslims by attributing everything which happened in the Muslim world to panislam. The Armenian press and journalists intended by this means to depict the Muslims as enemies of the Christians.³⁴

Another example of this sort of writing is provided by *Tazä Hāyat* regular Ähmäd Tābīb Hälāfzadä.³⁵ Of the Armenians, he says,

This people, in whatever province of the Ottoman Empire they are found, has, for some years now, spent every day and every hour turning that province into chaos and disorder, angering the government’s subjects. By writing that the Christians are not safe and that the government is not qualified, it insults Islam’s king before the other [sic] Christian kings. The European governments have opened their hearts and their hands to them so that they can put their corrupt schemes into practice. They keep Iran’s hands and heart full, lest it be taken by surprise. . . . They depict Ardebil as if no one had better settle there. [The same for] the other provinces. You see how every day in the columns of *Tazä Hāyat* and *Iršad*, Tabriz is compared to a war zone in which, so to say, the Muslims will attack each other or attack the Christians and demolish them.

The author deliberately lumped *Iršad* with *Tazä Hāyat* as giving too much credibility to the Armenian press; he was objecting to the use made in the pages of *Tazä Hāyat* of the often skeptical coverage of the events in constitutionalist Iranian Azerbaijan which was appearing in the Armenian press.

One use Hāšim bey had for Armenian-baiting was to use it against his rival, the Young Turk element, particularly *Iršad*. An article in the armenophilic *Tifliski Listok* had conveniently congratulated *Iršad* for exposing the true nature of Ottoman despotism to the Caucasian Muslims, who had generally considered the Sultan to be a pure and sacred figure. This gave Hāšim bey the opportunity to label “*Iršad*, which fills the world with corruption,” as a cat’s paw of the “boo-hoo Armenians.”³⁶

In any case, it is true that *Tazä Hāyat* carried articles from the Armenian press. Indeed, the translations from the Armenian press were mostly *not* a matter of eavesdropping on the enemy; rather, they were a recognition of the fact that this press was a good source of news. For example, much of the Iran news consisted of such translations, which usually ran without comment.

More to the point, there were articles which fit the description of true armenophilia as defined above. In his column *Böylä Değlmi?*, *Tazä Hāyat* regular Heydär ‘Äbdüllahzadä Fätḥ ‘Ähof of Iran gave this touching portrayal of Armenian public-mindedness:³⁷

³² “*Hāyrah Qonšularımız*,” *Tazä Hāyat*, I:15 (April 20/May 3, 1907).

³³ Translated in the Armenian Press column, *Tazä Hāyat*, I:20 (April 27/May 10, 1907).

³⁴ “*Panıslamısm vü Ermänilär*,” *Tazä Hāyat*, I:22 (May 1/14, 1907)

³⁵ “*İrandä Ermäni Tayfäsiniñ Şeytänät Fikrläri*,” *Tazä Hāyat*, I:61 (June 26/July 9, 1907)

³⁶ Editorial comment at the end of the Foreign Affairs column, *Tazä Hāyat*, I:7 (April 8/21, 1907).

³⁷ *Tazä Hāyat*, I:76 (July 17/30, 1907).

According to an Armenian living in Tiflis, his wife was forced to migrate from her dear homeland because she was not able to find bread to buy in Tabriz, and had just arrived in Tiflis. This Armenian said, “When I heard that my wife had arrived, I bought some supplies for the house and some bread. As soon as my wife saw the bread, her eyes began to fill with tears. I said, ‘Wife, why are you crying at this time? Isn’t it so that, thank G-d, you’ll be able to eat this beautiful bread every day?’ When my wife heard this, she wept all the more bitterly and said, ‘Am I not a human being? How can this bread have any appeal if I can’t see my dear compatriots?... My conscience won’t let me forget, by exalted G-d, Iran’s poverty...’ ” I write about this so that our dear readers’ noble attention might be drawn to the fact that an Armenian woman could be so heartbroken for her compatriots. I submit: Why don’t our clergy, who, from the throne of the pulpit call the poor the wealthy’s subjects and feed them advice about being patient in their starving, just stop. What keeps Their Eminences’ eyes from opening and seeing the annihilating poverty around them?... Why don’t they let the Iranian people taste the sweet fruits of the freedom which they have gained through their valiant zeal and at the cost of their lives? For a thousand years, instead of being grateful for blessed exalted G-d’s gifts, they every day sow division, between Heydari and Ne‘mati, say, or between Sheikhi and Usuli, or something or other, setting the common people against each other for the sake of their own corrupt schemes. Now, these people want to keep the people base and ignorant of Islam and of humanism and their hands stained with their brothers’ blood.

A similar point is made by this same author in an article on a trip he took to Iran.³⁸ On a train to the Iranian border, he sees a pair of Armenians:

A young Armenian and an old, long-bearded Armenian priest both got off the train with their luggage gathered behind them, looking for a cab which would take them to Nakhichevan. The young Armenian looked like he was from Nakhichevan, but the priest seemed to have been from somewhere else. Just then, a gendarme came up to them and took one of their satchels by the handle and ordered them to open it. The color fled from the young Armenian, and he refrained from opening it. Just then, the priest came up behind him and boldly tried to go past the gendarme. But the latter, saying nothing, stood firm. They opened the satchel. In one corner of it was some cotton. When the gendarme unraveled the cotton, two bombs appeared. On the other side of the box were many bullets and much gun powder.

... Seeing the Armenian priest tolerate such a disaster of his own will and for the sake of his nation, [I said to myself], “May a rock strike the head of some of our clerical impostors who, instead of helping their people, their kind... commit devilry. May those clerics burn who didn’t have the eyes to see how the nation progressed and elevated itself two years ago. May those clergy of ours remain under a rock who can’t come out of their houses to do work all year, but when Ramadan and Muharram come around, come out like leeches and such the blood of the poor.”

Even more striking is an editorial in which Häsım bey lashed out at his enemies, who had evidently been sending him piles of poison pen letters. He wrote,³⁹

The more a backward a people is, the more it is remote from progress and civilization’s basic values. . . , the more scheming and conniving [*dasa’ıslıq danusbazlıq*] it will have; the

³⁸ “*Iranä Sıyahätim,*” *Tazä Häyat*, I:139 (October 17/30, 1907).

³⁹ *Tazä Häyat,* “*Danusbazlıq,*” I:53 (June 14/27, 1907).

more these villains and vile beings there are among a people, the more backward and miserable and vagrant it will be considered. . . . That people or faith which is nourished by the fruits of progress and learning and is accustomed to living a free and dignified existence, that people and faith will drive out these base characteristics and those that bear them. These days, among the Europeans, even among the Russians, the Jews, the Georgians, and the Armenians, there is not a trace of scheming [*danusbazlıq*]. They are so firm, so dignified in their behavior that in any of them, any shortcoming, any fault, any betrayal, any nonhuman deed which is seen among them is instantly brought out in the open to be discussed, either among the people or in the press or before the government.

If among our Armenian and Georgian neighbors, a little of this vile character, compared to us, remains, the wise and the concerned, with complete sincerity and unity, work to eliminate such characteristics as soon as they appear. As for us Caucasian Muslims, scheming and conniving is still considered an art; schemers and connivers are considered clever.

. . . The more despotism and absolutism there is among a people, the more there will be of such unclean characteristics, such devilry. . . . For a governor to win the confidence of a prince, he sells his religion, his faith, his conscience. . . . We Caucasian Muslims have for centuries been ruled by various khans and amirs, and we have inherited these vile characteristics from our ancestors.

This letter is particularly striking when compared with its author's denunciation of the Armenian press for making more or less the same point.

5 Conclusion