

# “BAHLUL”

## AND “MIRAT” AZERBAIJANI SATIRICAL MAGAZINES

### REVISTAS SATÍRICAS AZERBAIYANAS “BAHLUL”Y “MIRAT”

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Suggested citation (APA, seventh ed.)

Namazova, S. (2025). “Bahlul” and “Mirat” Azerbaijani satirical magazines. *Universidad y Sociedad*, 17(1), e4926.

#### ABSTRACT

This article examines the relevance of the Azerbaijani satirical magazines Bahlul and Mirat, placing their contributions to Azerbaijani literature and culture within the context of socio-political transformation of the beginning of XX century. The main aim is to bring forward the role these magazines played in nation-building processes, socio-political critique, and challenging literary traditions. Bahlul, named after the folkloric figure synonymous with wit, resorted to satire as its way into contemporary social and political issue engagement, whereas Mirat, meaning “Mirror,” did this through reflected critique on society’s mores. Although inspired by Molla Nasreddin, both magazines built their tradition/vision of satire in the Azerbaijani literature, influencing in the process public opinion and fostering critical discourse. Thus, both magazines served as intellectual channels for humor entwined with reformism and protest. The enduring legacy of Bahlul and Mirat is a reflection of their pioneering role in merging satire with social commentary, a tradition that continues to reverberate in Azerbaijani culture.

#### Keywords:

Azerbaijani literature, National identity, Satire, Social and political critique.

#### RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la relevancia de las revistas satíricas azerbaiyanas Bahlul y Mirat, ubicando sus contribuciones a la literatura y cultura azerbaiyanas en el contexto de la transformación sociopolítica de principios del siglo XX. El objetivo principal es destacar el papel que desempeñaron estas revistas en los procesos de construcción de la nación, la crítica sociopolítica y el desafío a las tradiciones literarias. Bahlul, llamada así por la figura folclórica sinónimo de ingenio, recurrió a la sátira como una forma de abordar cuestiones sociales y políticas contemporáneas, mientras que Mirat, que significa “Espejo”, lo hizo a través de una crítica reflexiva sobre las costumbres de la sociedad. Aunque inspiradas por Molla Nasreddin, ambas revistas construyeron su tradición/visión de la sátira en la literatura azerbaiyana, influyendo en el proceso en la opinión pública y fomentando el discurso crítico. Así, ambas revistas sirvieron como canales intelectuales para el humor entrelazado con el reformismo y la protesta. El legado perdurable de Bahlul y Mirat es un reflejo de su papel pionero en la fusión de la sátira con el comentario social, una tradición que sigue resonando en la cultura azerbaiyana.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura azerbaiyana, Identidad nacional, Sátira, Crítica social y política.

## INTRODUCTION

Azerbaijani satirical magazines published at the beginning of the last century formed bright pages in the history of literary and social thought of the country, and had an exceptional impact on the development of the press and literature. Among the satirical journals published in Azerbaijani, "Molla Nasreddin" (1906-1931), "Bahlul" (1907), "Zanbur" (1909-1910), "Mirat" (1910), "Ari" (1910-1911), "Kalniyat" (1912-1913), "Lak-lak" (1914), "Tuti" (1914-1917), "Funny" (1914-1915), "Babayi-Amir" (1915-1916), "Tartan-partan" (1918), and "Torch" (1919-1920) drew attention to the prevailing negativities in life and the hardships of people's existence (Afary & Afary, 2021). Through numerous articles published in their pages, they encouraged people to engage in a consistent struggle for their rights. Furthermore, these satirical magazines also contributed to the flourishing development of satirical-political journalism (McClennen, 2024).

It is clear that written examples constitute an important part of our literary resources. In this regard, the significance of the satirical magazines that emerged in the early 20th century in the press world is notable. Literary heritage plays an important role in the country's economy, as evidenced by the example of Nottingham (Namazova & Taghiyev, 2023; Taghiyev & Osmanova, 2023).

The devoted researcher of our national press history, Nazim Akhundov, in his study extensively discussed Azerbaijani satirical magazines and summarized his thoughts as follows:

Satirical magazines are one of the significant sources that reflect the social contradictions of the 20th century, the people's inclinations toward freedom, and their critical attitude toward the old world. Many of these magazines tried to follow the path of the famous 'Molla Nasreddin' magazine. (Akhundov, 1968, p. 3).

For example, the journal "Molla Nasreddin" regularly sought to convey various information about the nation's name, language, and territory to the public through artistic and journalistic language, featuring poetry, stories, pamphlets, and examples in other genres in its individual issues (Namazova, 2017, p. 345).

The role of national press organs in the development of new trends that emerged in Azerbaijani social, cultural, and literary thought from the mid-19th century is undeniable (Suleymanli, 2021). Critical social and moral problems of the time were addressed in the press, and solutions were investigated as public opinion was directed toward a certain course. By the beginning of the 20th century, these trends and movements began to strengthen, with

increased attention to democratic ideas in society, the shortcomings hindering people's development, and their solutions (Chan et al., 2024; Wu, 2024). All these factors strengthened the need for criticism and freedom of opinion in society, as well as the need to form an environment of democracy (Namazova, 2019, p. 158).

As stated before, one of the most important satirical magazine was "Bahlul", the first issue of which was published in Baku on May 19th, 1907. The magazine, which was not so long in life, was published in the "Kaspi" printing house, and its editor was Alasgar Aliyev, who is considered one of the well-known educational figures of Azerbaijan. He completed the Russo-Tatar school in Baku in 1893 and worked as a typesetter at the "Kaspi" printing house. Alasgar Aliyev expanded his public activities from the beginning of the last century by printing and distributing political leaflets, and from 1904 to 1908, he worked as a teacher in Baku and surrounding areas. The journal "Bahlul" occupies a special place in the publicistic activity of Alasgar Aliyev, who regularly cooperated with various media outlets of the time. "Bahlul", which continued the creative traditions of the satirical journal "Molla Nasreddin", was a bi-monthly publication, a "magazine of humor" that covered political, scientific, literary, economic, and social issues. Alongside Alasgar Aliyev, the pages of the "Bahlul" magazine featured writings on a variety of topics by authors such as Mirza Alakbar Sabir, Ali Razi Shamchizade, and Aligulu Gamskisar. It is sad that such a significant publication has only had nine issues in Azerbaijani language with Arabic alphabet. Its publication was halted on November 4th, 1907, immediately after the release of the 9th issue, due to its "harmful ideology". The magazine's focus on reflecting the revolutionary struggle of the working people during the years 1905-1907 led to its publication being discontinued. Another of the published works influenced by the creative school of "Molla Nasreddin" was also "Mirat". The satirical magazine "Mirat", a collection of humor, was published in Baku from June 19 to July 17, 1910. The editor of the magazine was Aliabbas Taghizade. The criticism methods of "Molla Nasreddin" were also used in the writings of "Mirat". In the articles of the magazine, special attention was paid to such methods as irony, comparison, indirect criticism, saying the word in the opposite sense, giving some solid facts in parentheses, and so on.

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a typesetter at the “Kaspi” printing house. Alasgar Aliyev expanded his public activities from the beginning of the last century by printing and distributing political leaflets, and from 1904 to 1908, he worked as a teacher in Baku and surrounding areas. The journal “Bahlul” occupies a special place in the publicistic activity of Alasgar Aliyev, who regularly collaborated with various media outlets of the time. “Bahlul”, which continued the creative traditions of the satirical journal “Molla Nasreddin”, was a bi-monthly publication, a “magazine of humor” that covered political, scientific, literary, economic, and social issues. Alongside Alasgar Aliyev, the pages of “Bahlul” magazine featured writings on various topics by authors such as Mirza Alakbar Sabir, Ali Razi Shamchizade, and Aligulu Gamkusar. It is unfortunate that such a significant publication had only nine issues in the Azerbaijani language with Arabic alphabet. Its publication was halted on November 4th, 1907, immediately after the release of the 9th issue, due to its “harmful ideology”. The magazine’s focus on reflecting the revolutionary struggle of working people during the years 1905-1907 led to its discontinuation. Another publication influenced by the creative school of “Molla Nasreddin” was “Mirat”. The satirical magazine “Mirat”, a collection of humor, was published in Baku from June 19 to July 17, 1910. The editor of the magazine was Aliabbas Taghizade. The criticism methods of “Molla Nasreddin” were also employed in the writings of “Mirat”. In the magazine’s articles, special attention was paid to such methods as irony, comparison, indirect criticism, saying words in the opposite sense, presenting solid facts in parentheses, and other similar techniques.

The satirical “Bahlul” magazine rendered great services in highlighting the most important issues of the time and in the struggle for public education. On the magazine’s pages, alongside various poems and feuilletons under different satirical signatures, news from cities like Nukha, Ganja, Tabriz, Tbilisi, and others was highlighted, with efforts made to make the magazine more readable and aligned with public interests. The name of the “Bahlul” magazine was chosen to correspond with that of Bahlul Dananda, a truth-loving figure who, like Molla Nasreddin, became famous among the people for his jokes. Although Bahlul, the brother of Harun ar Rashid, was a historical figure, he became legendary in the Middle East like Molla Nasreddin and became an expression of folk wisdom. The magazine’s rich artistic design and its favorable attitude toward “Molla Nasreddin” were also evident from the writings and illustrations published on its pages.

On the cover of every issue of the “Bahlul” magazine, alongside the subscription cost and table of contents, the address of the editorial office was provided with the

following notice: “The editorial board has the authority to edit manuscripts, and articles not written in clear Turkish will not be published. Letters without signatures and those deemed uninteresting will not be accepted.” The aforementioned lines clarified the compilation’s aim and purpose in detail. “The compilation published on the 19th of May” began to communicate with readers through the article of the same name. By stating “Be enlightened and aware, O people of the world! My guide has sent me, and I have come to rescue you from a few disgraceful matters,” the magazine showed loyalty to the style of “Molla Nasreddin.”

Considering the above, the goal of this research is to analyze the cultural, political, and literary contributions of the satirical magazines Bahlul and Mirat during the beginning of XX century, a pivotal period of social transformation of Azerbaijan. It is highlighted their significance in fostering national identity, encouraging socio-political critique, and establishing a lasting tradition of using satire as a medium for intellectual and cultural expression in Azerbaijani literature.

## DEVELOPMENT

From the very first day of its activity, writers who established creative connections with the magazine sent their writings to the publication in a style similar to that of “Molla Nasreddin”, showing great effort and dedication in their work. On the pages of “Bahlul”, a series of articles was published under various headings such as “Telegraph news”, “Baku news”, “Caucasus news”, “General news”, “Mixed news”, “Foreign news”, “The Islamic World”, “Announcements”, “Dictionary”, “Our Mailbox”, “From the Editorial Board” and others. These articles covered a wide range of events occurring both inside and outside the country, addressing various interesting and timely issues for readers’ attention. The writings in the magazine focused on criticizing negative aspects such as social backwardness, religious fanaticism, outdated customs and traditions in family and domestic life, flaws in state governance, and generally negative characteristics of the existing society; these points were presented to readers in a satirical style.

“Bahlul” was similar to “Molla Nasreddin” in terms of format. On pages 1, 4, 5, and 8 of the magazine, there were illustrations, while pages 2, 3, 6, and 7 featured satirical poems and feuilletons, important news, telegraph reports, and other writings. Nazim Akhundov’s research shows that two satirical magazines called “Bahlul” were published. The first one is the magazine we discussed, while the second was a same-named publication that was published in Tehran in 1909 by Azerbaijani and Iranian

militants. Most issues of “Bahlul” featured interesting materials related to the “Molla Nasreddin” magazine. Indeed, two pages of the magazine’s 4th issue dated 1907 were dedicated to “Molla Nasreddin”.

It is known that on June 8th of the same year, the publication of “Molla Nasreddin” magazine was suspended by the Governor-General of Tbilisi. The public responded to this event with protest, sending numerous petitions in the form of telegrams and letters from cities such as Baku, Ganja, Nukha, Tabriz, and others, requesting the continuation of the magazine’s publication in Tbilisi. In the article titled “Conversation”, “Bahlul” attributed the closure of “Molla Nasreddin” magazine to the treacherous policies of the Tsarist regime. In another article titled “My Own Insight”, the journal openly declared that the closure of the journal was caused by flattering “informers”, emphasizing their hostility and treachery toward the people. In that issue of “Bahlul”, the pamphlet titled “Mushtulug”, signed with the satirical pen name “Firildag”, expressed sharp anger and contempt toward the reactionary forces who rejoiced over the temporary closure of “Molla Nasreddin”.

In “Bahlul” magazine, extensive attention was given to the interpretation and comprehensive coverage of pressing issues such as the situation in the Muslim world, religious superstition tendencies, policies intensifying national tensions, existing shortcomings in governance, the treatment of women, literature, and other critical matters. Feuilletons, travelogues, dialogues, satirical poems, and illustrations reflecting literary, social, and political issues were featured in most issues of the magazine in a form that matched the demands of the time. Among these were the collections published in issues 1, 2, and 3 of “Bahlul” magazine on May 19th, 1907: (“Mushtulug,” 1907), “Important event in Shirvan” (1907, p. 3), and *On the fate* (1907a, p. 3); *On the Fate*, 1907b, p. 3). In these and other feuilletons, various aspects reflecting the realities of the current social environment were addressed, and numerous points were sarcastically conveyed to readers.

In general, the magazine’s artistic materials were issued in various secret signatures, mostly in accordance with the spirit of the satirical publication: “Bahlul”, “Duzakhi”, “Mirza Digh-dighi”, “Nakhalaf”, “Heyrati”, “Yukhulu”, “A.Duduk”, “Bambulu”, “Dardmand”, “Tamasha qabagi”, “Firildag”, “Titratmali”, “A. M.”, “Geydkash”, “Aghizlari gifildayan”, “Maryak”, “Ganmaz (Irani)”, “Jarubuddovla”, “Bitli badan”, “Laubali”, “Iplama”, “Zurnachi”, “Shalvarul-Zakirin”, “Muahidi Gadim”, “Agrab”, “Xudaniz Mirza Khatbashi”.

### Topics of “Bahlul” magazine

In the first issue of the satirical magazine, the feuilleton titled “The collection published on May 19th” signed by “Bahlul” promoted themes of calling people to knowledge, enlightenment, and spiritual unity, as well as efforts to discourage wrongful actions and encourage engagement in cultural and educational work. From the very first issue, “Bahlul” called on the common people to struggle against the tyranny of the ruling powers. The magazine not only published news and articles from Baku but also explained events in several areas of Azerbaijan through journalistic samples on its pages.

The magazine published letters and news of diverse content from various regions of Azerbaijan. These letters were often sent by special correspondents of the magazine, who presented the regional situations to readers in a satirical form. Among them, a special correspondent from Ganja, signing with the pseudonym “A.Duduk,” addressed the journal with an article expressing his intent and purpose from his first arrival in the city, in a manner perfectly aligned with the overall spirit of Bahlul’s editorial approach: “Dear Sheikh Bahlul, after greeting you with peace and prayers, I inform you that as you had sent me from Baku to Ganja city as a correspondent, I have arrived safely and soundly in Ganja. Now I am starting to write to you about any story of the city of Ganja, so that you can enjoy it like ‘someone’” (“From Ganja (from Our Special Correspondent),” 1907, p. 7).

In an article sent to the magazine under the signature of “Nakhalaf” from Nukha through a special correspondent (“From Nukha (from Our Special Correspondent),” 1907, pp. 6–7), the writer criticized signs of religious fanaticism, especially the ignorance of Muslims under the current conditions, and asked “Bahlul” to pay attention to these issues and publish them in the collection. During this period, correspondent articles were sent to the magazine primarily from Ganja, Shamakhi, Gazakh, Gabala, Sheki, Guba, and Shamkir cities. In addition to domestic news, articles reflecting situations abroad were also given dedicated space in the collection. Furthermore, news characterizing the general situation in specific locations was presented to readers under the title “Telegraph news” in the magazine.

The “Telegraph news” section in the first issue of “Bahlul” demonstrates this approach: “St. Petersburg – The Muslim faction will finish their work and, in a few days, will gain freedom from the smoke. They sent a telegraph to the people of Tabriz - Majlis. Those seeking freedom, if a railway line is not built between Tabriz and Tehran, will not distribute freedom to the people”. Overall, the events that took place in Anzali, Tehran, Rasht, Gazvin, Sabzevar, Kerman, Mashhad, and other places at the beginning of

the last century were clearly reflected in “Bahlul.” Although this news was concise and laconic in terms of volume, it was remarkable in terms of content because it questioned the essence of very important events.

Under the title “Foreign news,” the articles in the magazine emphasized the importance of promptly informing readers about events happening in various countries, cities, and provinces. The general situation in places like Istanbul, Tehran, Ardabil, Tabriz, Anzali, Gazvin, Mashhad, and others was clarified through satirical writings. The events taking place in these territories became the main topic of “Foreign news” in “Bahlul.” From the fifth issue of the magazine, dated July 14th, 1907, we read the following: “A big lightning struck in Istanbul. His Majesty the Sultan’s grand palace roof was destroyed. That’s why the gentleman was very scared and had become ill. According to news heard from Tabriz, a large company has been formed recently. It has raised thirteen million manat for its foundation. The collected money will be spent on several areas: 1) One-year tram will be installed. 2) A hospital will be built. 3) A medical school will be opened so that children who have graduated from schools in Anzali, Tarum, Kermanshah, Hamadan and other places can come and study there. According to news from Egypt, it is reported that His Majesty the Sultan has made a promise that if he recovers from his illness, he will open the doors of justice and freedom to the public the next day” (“Foreign News,” 1907, p. 7).

The “Bahlul” magazine also contains examples of work by the outstanding satirical poet Mirza Alakbar Sabir. His satirical poems such as “Aghniyalar qinasi, or zadagan baghirtisi,” “Taraneyi-asilana,” “Bezi yerlerde tesaduf olunur ashe, ata,” “Men bele esrare qana bilmirem,” and others were published in various issues of Bahlul magazine in 1907. In these poems published in “Bahlul,” Sabir sharply criticized social injustice, inequality, vulgarity, and ignorance, highlighting numerous social problems faced by society at that time. Sabir used many secret satirical signatures in the press. According to the book “Signatures” by prominent researchers of our national press, Gulam Mammadli and Afag Aliyeva, and other sources, the pseudonyms “Duzakhi,” “Yukhulu,” “Aghizlari gifildayan,” “Jarubuddovla,” and “Laubali” used in Bahlul journal also belong to Sabir (Mammadli & Aliyeva, 2015).

### **Genres characterizing the social-political, socio-cultural life of the period in the magazine “Bahlul”**

It should also be noted that “Bahlul” reserved space for dialogue and skit genres, which thoroughly addressed important topics of that time - the life of workers and peasants, and issues of people’s freedom. The

satirical magazine published skits and dialogues entitled “Mutafarriqa” (1907, p. 6), “Conversation” (1907, p. 7), and “Conversation of Four Friends” (1907, p. 6). In the article titled “Conversation,” the aim and purpose of the satirical “Molla Nasreddin” magazine and its follower “Bahlul” were clarified through interesting comparisons: “...You, uncle Bahlul, wrote a few collections. I could not understand anything. But, my friend, I have become suspicious of this third issue. I noticed that it closely resembles the words of our late Molla Nasreddin, and you are slowly following in his footsteps. His Mirza Khortdan wrote hellish letters in prose. But Mirza Duzakh writes what he sees in poetry. He has ‘Dali,’ you have ‘Yukhulu.’ He has ‘Gizdirmalisi,’ you have ‘Titratmali.’ That late one used to wander among the people, and you are provoking. I’m afraid that, like that late one, you too might eventually fall victim to the deceit and slander of informers. Although I think Molla Nasreddin is gone, today or tomorrow, he will come to work again. If Bahlul also goes, others will come instead” (Conversation, 1907, p. 7).

The journal “Bahlul” also featured satirical genres such as travelogues, bahri-tavil, mailbox, question-and-answer, dictionaries, and others. Additionally, in the announcements of “Bahlul,” regular attention was paid to important moments characterizing the socio-political and socio-cultural life of the time.

In the satirical journal “Bahlul,” although there aren’t many examples of caricatures, they stand out in terms of meaning and content. The caricatures featured in the journal from the first issue to the sixth were drawn by Y.Y.Hamberg, while the subsequent ones were created by S.B.Jalilbeyov. Some of the pictures were drawn by Azim Azimzadeh, who was just beginning his career at that time. These caricatures sharply criticized ignorance, the lack of women’s rights, reactionary forces, and religious fanaticism. A notable example appears in the 6th issue of the journal, dated September 13th, 1907. In this caricature, the author uses bitter irony to highlight the prevalent problem of religious fanaticism and ignorance. The caricature depicts a conversation between an indifferent religious figure and his son: *“Oh son! Climb onto the roof and let me know if they’re carrying away a dead body or something.” To which the son replies: “Oh father! They’ve carried away one of those who died for the sake of the nation”*.

In the 4th issue of “Bahlul” dated June 30th, 1907, a news item titled “From the Administration” presents this content:

We inform our newspapers that the illustrator of the ‘Bahlul’ journal has left Baku. Having no choice, we had the illustrations drawn by another illustrator. This illustrator was

inexperienced, which is why the images in this issue turned out poorly. God willing, from now on, our illustrations will be better, as one of the famous painters of Tbilisi has promised us that he will paint our pictures well. (Akhtar, 1907, p. 2).

It appears that the editors of the magazine contacted the editors of “Molla Nasreddin” to strengthen the artistic quality of the pictures at that time, and an agreement was reached. The “Bahlul” administration even addressed a special announcement to the readers regarding this matter.

It should be noted that the magazine “Bahlul” was kept under constant control by the Tsarist censorship. Its writings were first thoroughly reviewed, and while the publication of certain revolutionary materials was not permitted, the journal informed its readers about this in the style of “Molla Nasreddin.” The space for articles that were not allowed to be published was either left completely empty in the magazine, or it was stated that “they were not published for reasons independent of the editorial office.” For example, in issue 3 of the magazine in 1907, half of page 4 was left completely white, with the following words written across it in a red line: “This page was not printed for several reasons...”

After the closure of “Bahlul,” Alasgar Aliyev initiated the launch of a second satirical magazine called “Leylac” in Baku in 1909 (Ramiyev, 1926, p. 209). However, additional information about this initiative is not available. It should also be noted that the writings of Ələsgər Əliyev, known as an author of revolutionary-journalistic articles in the Azerbaijani press, were published in newspapers and journals such as “Ulfat” (St. Petersburg), “Turkustan” (Tashkent), “Vaqt” (Kazan), “Khurshid” (Tehran), “Qarjis” (Astrakhan), and others.

### Criticism targets of the “Mirat” satirical collection

The “Mirat” journal was printed at Hashim bey Vazirov’s “Sada” printing house. Although Mirzabala Mahammadzade’s book “Azerbaijani Turkish Press” (Mahammadzade, 2022, p. 60) mentions only one issue of Mirat, in fact, five issues of this satirical magazine were published. “Mirat” had promised its readers from the outset that it would not remain indifferent to events occurring in society and would objectively address and criticize shortcomings. Due to pressure from the Tsarist censorship and Aliabbas Tagzade’s inexperience, the magazine could not continue its publication. The following information appeared in the 5th issue: “The publication of our issue, which was scheduled for Saturday, July 17th, was delayed until today due to the general strike of Muslim typewriters. For this, we apologize to our readers” (*Ikhtar*, 1910, p. 6).

All issues of the magazine included these two stanzas of poetry as an epigraph:

“Don’t say that ‘Mirat’ will disgrace me,

It will show you to the people just as you are.”

In an article published in the first issue of “Mirat,” the critical methods characteristic of “Molla Nasreddin” are clearly evident. The article titled “From the Editorial Board” states: “Recently, it has become necessary for the administration to write a lead article in the first issue of every newly launched newspaper and journal. However, contrary to tradition, we did not write a lead article in our journal” (*From the Editorial Board*, 1910, p. 2).

The magazine’s purpose becomes clear from the following context. “Mirat” refuses to write an article because it would have had to explain its point of view, which led to conflicts. The magazine tries to convince its readers that “Mirat” has no issues. In its pages, feuilletons were primarily published under the heading “Qahqaha.” The column in the first issue sharply criticized those who opposed the education of the people. In the feuilleton published in the second issue, the colonial oppression of Eastern countries was conveyed to readers in a satirical way. The poems published in “Mirat” were mainly given under the title “Literature.” Their content clearly reflects the style characteristic of the Molla Nasreddin movement. Although some of these poems were not strong in artistic terms, they conveyed various flawed aspects of the period to readers. One of the magazine’s permanent departments was “Badkuba.” Here, the local chronicle was presented in a satirical style, closely resembling the approach used in “Molla Nasreddin.”

Both international events and local narratives were depicted in the cartoons of Mirat magazine. In the first issue, an article signed by “Dolavari-dovran” criticized, with a satirical tone, those who opposed the publication of newspapers and journals and those who resisted the enlightenment of the people through these media. The article humorously commented: “Indeed, there are strange things in the world. They have strange people. May God grant long life to our ancestors, for they have spoken many wise proverbs. They said that: there were too many skinny ones, and now another one has come, with torn heels.’ O, men, we are already fed up with one or two journals, and now this one comes out, as if we really need another journal. The name is ‘Mirat.’ So subscribe! What is it for? They must understand that, for the sake of a Muslim, one could publish two hundred journals and write four hundred articles. It will not have a long life.”

In the feuilleton titled “Gariba tamasha,” signed by “Mashadi baggal,” the author indirectly referenced the actions of reactionary forces alarmed by the establishment of modern schools. The author remarked:

They talked so much, made such a commotion that, in the end, they managed to establish a few schools in Baku, resembling the ‘Usul-i-Jadid’ style, and introduced them to the public. The Muslim brothers also went and started sending their children to these schools. Our beautiful madrasas suddenly disappeared. For five hundred years, our ancestors, along with the mullahs and sheikhs, had built wonderful schools, but these corrupt ones found them useless. (*Gariba Tamasha*, 1910, p. 3).

Mirat remained loyal to the traditions of Molla Nasreddin and played a notable role in advancing Azerbaijani satirical journalism despite its inherent limitations.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is gratifying to note that two valuable examples of Azerbaijani satirical press, the Bahlul and Mirat journals, have recently been transliterated from Arabic script into the Latin alphabet and compiled into printed editions complete with dictionaries, notes, and explanations. The scope, themes, depictions, and narrative techniques of the Molla Nasreddin magazine were notably extensive, encompassing not only the entire Muslim East and the Turkic world but also the issues arising from interactions between the East and the West. The primary objective of the magazine, however, was to address the challenges faced by Azerbaijan, including social, cultural, and moral-ethical issues that impeded the country’s ability to align with the pace of contemporary progress, and to confront these problems through critique and exposure. In this context, Azerbaijani satirical journals and satirical literature in general played a pivotal role in shaping literary and social thought. Molla Nasreddin and similar publications broadened their influence across the Near and Middle East, contributing positively to the advancement of press and literature in those regions.

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