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### Actual Problems of the Present

№3 (53)

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БОЛАШАҚ-БАСПА  
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## Folklore issues in the newspaper “Sheki fehlesi”

*Turkana İbrahimova*<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup> Azerbaijan University of Tourism and Management, Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan. E-mail: [ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1392-9472>

### Abstract

This article examines folklore materials published from the late 1930s to 1990 in the regional newspaper *Şəki fəhləsi* and under its former historical titles. The study aims to systematize newspaper sources and identify the distinctive features of the development of ashig art in Sheki, the reception of Ashig Molla Juma's legacy, and the ways in which local folklore entered public cultural circulation. The research material comprises ashig poems, articles about performers, reports concerning manuscripts and biographical information, and publications devoted to folk ensembles, dances, children's games, and humorous folklore. Historical-comparative, hermeneutic, and descriptive methods are employed. The newspaper materials are compared with later folklore scholarship and manuscript sources, allowing their documentary character, authorial interpretation, and ideological content to be distinguished. The findings show that *Şəki fəhləsi* preserved important historical information about the ashig milieu of Sheki. Materials concerning Molla Juma's biography, manuscripts, the authentication of his photograph, and his influence on later performers establish his place in regional cultural memory. The analysis of poems by Ashig Mugum, Ashig Piri, and Ashig Musa reveals the coexistence of traditional poetic imagery and Soviet ideological vocabulary. Publications on folk ensembles, dances, children's games, and anecdotes demonstrate the functions of folklore in everyday cultural life. The study's originality lies in examining dispersed newspaper materials from different years for the first time within a unified historical and textual framework. The findings confirm the importance of regional periodicals as sources for reconstructing folklore history, preserving local traditions, and explaining the mechanisms of their intergenerational transmission.

**Keywords:** *Şəki fəhləsi* newspaper, ashig art, Molla Juma, regional folklore, cultural memory.

## «Шеки фехлеси» газетіндегі фольклор мәселелері

*Туркана Ибрагимова*<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup> Әзірбайжан туризм және менеджмент университеті, Баку, Әзірбайжан Республикасы. E-mail: [ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1392-9472>

### Аннотация

Бұл мақалада 1930-жылдардың соңы мен 1990 жыл аралығында өңірлік «*Şəki fəhləsi*» газетінде және оның бұрынғы тарихи атауларымен жарияланған фольклорлық материалдар зерттеледі. Зерттеудің мақсаты – газет беттеріндегі деректерді жүйелеу арқылы Шеки аймағындағы ашуг өнерінің даму ерекшеліктерін, Ашуг Молла Жұма мұрасының қабылдануын және жергілікті фольклордың қоғамдық мәдени айналымға ену жолдарын анықтау. Зерттеу материалына ашуг өлеңдері, орындаушылар туралы мақалалар, қолжазбалар мен өмірбаяндық деректер жөніндегі хабарлар, сондай-ақ халық ансамбльдеріне, билерге, балалар ойындарына және әзіл-сықақ үлгілеріне арналған жарияланымдар енгізілді. Жұмыста тарихи-салыстырмалы, герменевтикалық және сипаттамалық әдістер қолданылды. Газет материалдары кейінгі фольклортану зерттеулерімен және қолжазба деректерімен

салыстырылып, олардың құжаттық сипаты, авторлық интерпретациясы және идеологиялық мазмұны өзара ажыратылды. Нәтижелер «Şəki fəhləsi» газетінің Шекидегі ашуг ортасы туралы маңызды тарихи мәліметтерді сақтағанын көрсетті. Молла Жұманың өмірбаяны, қолжазбалары, фотосуретінің анықталуы және кейінгі орындаушыларға ықпалы туралы материалдар оның өңірлік мәдени жадтағы орнын айқындайды. Ашуг Мұғым, Ашуг Пири және Ашуг Мұса өлеңдерін талдау дәстүрлі поэтикалық бейнелер мен кеңестік идеологиялық лексиканың қатар қолданылғанын көрсетті. Халық ансамбльдері, билер, балалар ойындары және анекдоттар туралы жарияланымдар фольклордың күнделікті мәдени өмірдегі қызметін танытады. Зерттеудің ғылыми жаңалығы әр жылдары шашыраңқы жарияланған газет материалдарын алғаш рет біртұтас тарихи-мәтіндік жүйеде қарастыруымен анықталады. Алынған нәтижелер өңірлік мерзімді басылымдардың фольклор тарихын қалпына келтірудегі, жергілікті дәстүрлердің сақталуы мен ұрпақаралық берілу тетіктерін түсіндірудегі маңызды дереккөз екенін дәлелдейді.

**Кілт сөздер:** «Şəki fəhləsi» газеті, ашуг өнері, Молла Жұма, өңірлік фольклор, мәдени жад.

## Фольклорные вопросы в газете «Шеки фехлеси»

*Туркана Ибрагимова<sup>1\*</sup>*

<sup>1\*</sup> Азербайджанский университет туризма и менеджмента, Баку, Республика Азербайджан.  
E-mail: [ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1392-9472>

### Аннотация

В статье исследуются фольклорные материалы, опубликованные с конца 1930-х годов по 1990 год в региональной газете «Şəki fəhləsi» и под её прежними историческими названиями. Цель исследования заключается в систематизации газетных источников и выявлении особенностей развития ашугского искусства в Шеки, восприятия наследия Ашыга Моллы Джумы и способов включения местного фольклора в общественный культурный оборот. Материал исследования включает ашугские стихотворения, статьи об исполнителях, сообщения о рукописях и биографических сведениях, а также публикации, посвящённые народным ансамблям, танцам, детским играм и образцам юмористического фольклора. В работе применены историко-сравнительный, герменевтический и описательный методы. Газетные материалы сопоставлены с последующими фольклористическими исследованиями и рукописными источниками, что позволило разграничить их документальный характер, авторскую интерпретацию и идеологическое содержание. Результаты показали, что газета «Şəki fəhləsi» сохранила важные исторические сведения об ашугской среде Шеки. Материалы о биографии Моллы Джумы, его рукописях, установлении подлинности фотографии и влиянии на последующих исполнителей определяют его место в региональной культурной памяти. Анализ стихотворений Ашыга Мюгюма, Ашыга Пири и Ашыга Мусы выявил сочетание традиционной поэтической образности с советской идеологической лексикой. Публикации о народных ансамблях, танцах, детских играх и анекдотах раскрывают функции фольклора в повседневной культурной жизни. Научная новизна исследования состоит в том, что разрозненные газетные материалы разных лет впервые рассматриваются в единой историко-текстуальной системе. Полученные результаты подтверждают значение региональной периодической печати как источника для реконструкции истории фольклора, сохранения местных традиций и объяснения механизмов их межпоколенческой передачи.

**Keywords:** газета «Şəki fəhləsi», ашугское искусство, Молла Джума, региональный фольклор, культурная память..

### 1. Introduction

Regional newspapers are valuable sources for folklore research because they preserve materials that may not have entered academic editions, including local poetry, performance reports, biographical notes, oral narratives, and descriptions of customary practices. Sheki Fahlesi devoted sustained attention to such material alongside its political and economic reporting. Its pages included proverbs, sayings, anecdotes, ashig poetry, information on ashig performers and literary life, and discussions of folk creativity more broadly.

The study is informed by the view that regional periodicals can function as documentary repositories of local cultural history. Takmyanin notes that twentieth-century regional studies appeared not only in specialized academic journals but also in popular periodicals (Takmyanin, 2025:323). Azerbaijani folklore scholarship has also treated Sheki as a distinctive folklore environment: the regional folklore anthologies and later studies by Garayev and Vagifqizi document the strength of local ashig traditions and the cultural specificity of the Sheki area (Anthology of Azerbaijani folklore, 2002; Garayev, 2009; Vagifqizi, 2012). Within the literature cited in the present article, however, the folklore materials published in Sheki Fahlesi and its predecessor titles have not been brought together and examined systematically across such an extended period. The research gap, therefore, concerns not the existence of scholarship on Sheki folklore itself, but the underuse of the regional newspaper as a longitudinal primary source for reconstructing how folklore was documented, interpreted, and publicly circulated.

The article therefore asks three related questions: (1) What types of folklore material were published in Sheki Fahlesi and its predecessor titles? (2) What do these publications contribute to the reconstruction of the Sheki ashig environment and the reception of Ashig Molla Juma? and (3) How did the political and ideological context of the Soviet period shape the presentation of ashig poetry and folklore in the newspaper? The analysis treats the newspaper both as a primary historical source and as a mediated cultural text whose contents reflect editorial choices, contemporary scholarly debates, and the ideological conditions of publication.

For consistency, the general title Sheki Fahlesi is used when referring to the newspaper as a continuing publication. Historical titles such as Nukha Fahlesi and Nuxa Ishchisi are retained when a specific issue or cited source was published under that title.

## 2. Methods

The study applies historical-comparative, hermeneutic, and descriptive methods. The documented primary corpus comprises 18 identifiable newspaper items or issue clusters cited in the References, published between 1938 and 1990, together with supporting manuscript and secondary scholarly sources. Newspaper materials were included when they directly addressed folklore, ashig performers or poetry, Ashig Molla Juma, folk performance, dances, children's games, or anecdotes. The materials were grouped thematically and examined in relation to publication date, authorship, genre, subject matter, and historical context.

The historical-comparative method is used to compare claims made in different newspaper publications and to relate them to later folklore scholarship. Hermeneutic reading is used to interpret the cultural and ideological meanings of the texts, particularly where Soviet political vocabulary enters ashig poetry. Descriptive analysis identifies recurring genres, performers, cultural practices, and editorial themes across the corpus. The analytical procedure therefore proceeds from identification and thematic classification of relevant items to contextual reading and comparison with later scholarship.

The corpus is a documented selection rather than a complete census of every folklore-related item ever published by the newspaper. It is limited to the issues and publications available to the author and cited in the References. The figure of 18 refers to identifiable newspaper items or issue clusters analyzed directly in the present article; it does not imply that the surviving newspaper archive contains only 18 folklore-related publications. This limitation is stated explicitly so that the conclusions are understood as findings from the documented corpus rather than from an assumed complete archive.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. *The Sheki Ashig Environment and Early Newspaper Evidence*

One recurring issue in the literature is whether Sheki possessed a distinct and active ashig environment. The newspaper evidence examined here supports the existence of such a milieu by documenting performers, meetings, poems, and biographical materials connected with Nukha/Sheki. A useful early example is Sadnik Pashayev's article "Ashig Doni," published on July 18, 1968, which presents Doni as an Armenian-born performer who mastered Azerbaijani ashig poetry and composed in Azerbaijani. Pashayev describes Doni's use of established ashig genres and records local testimony about his life and work.

Regarding the content and artistic qualities of Ashig Doni's literary heritage, the researcher writes: "I visited the Dashbulag village of Sheki, where Doni was born, lived, and created, and met and talked with the village elders. It benefited me greatly. Ashig Doni skillfully used the genres of Azerbaijani Ashig poetry, such as Bayatı, Garayli, Chigali Garayli, Koshma, Diwani, and other genres in his work. The language of his poems is fluent, and their musicality is very strong. Allusions and similes are natural and original".

According to the author's notes, "Doni is an artist who knows the place of words in poetry, is able to use them effectively, and looks for meaning, content, and beauty in words. Doni created each of his poems with exquisite taste:

Unless otherwise indicated, English renderings of Azerbaijani poetic excerpts are sense-based translations prepared for readability while preserving the meaning and imagery of the source text; the Azerbaijani originals are retained alongside them for verification.

Nazlı dilbər, nə yaraşır qəddinə,  
Tirmə məndəm, kəmə məndən, bel səndən.  
Bayram olsun xına yaxın dəstinə,  
Əlvən məndən, güləz məndən, əl səndən (Pashayev, 1968:4).

Charming beauty, how graceful your figure,  
The shawl is from me, the belt from me; the waist is yours.  
May the henna on your hand mark a festive day,  
The colors are from me, the rosy glow from me; the hand is yours.

Ashig Doni, who captured the beauty of the Azerbaijani language in his poems, also had a significant influence on subsequent Ashig poetry, as noted by the young folklorist.

The article presents Ashig Doni as both a poet and musician and links his name to the melody "Godekdoni." This attribution is important as a piece of local cultural memory recorded in the newspaper, although it should be treated as a historical claim preserved by the source rather than as independently verified fact.

#### 3.2. *Ashig Molla Juma: Biography, Manuscripts, and Reception*

A major part of the newspaper's folklore coverage concerns Ashig Molla Juma and the wider Sheki ashig tradition. The cited issues include Nasreddin Garayev's "Molla Juma's New Manuscript," Jahangir Gaziyeu's "Some Notes about Molla Juma," Mahyeddin Pashazade (Abbasov)'s "Precious Find," Movlud Yarekhmadov's "Molla Juma," as well as later articles and features devoted to Juma's legacy and influence.

Nasreddin Garayev's article "Molla Juma's New Manuscript," published in Nukha Fahlesi, remains valuable because it records manuscript evidence and earlier scholarly views, even though some of its biographical attributions differ from those advanced in later sources. Garayev summarizes the limited information then available about Molla Juma and notes that some earlier publications associated him with Gakh or Ilisu. The present study compares those claims with newspaper materials

that identify Ashagi Layisqi in the Sheki/Nukha area as his birthplace and principal environment of activity.

Garayev notes that about 80 poems by Molla Juma appeared in a 1930 Azernashr collection compiled by Salman Mumtaz, while biographical information remained limited. He further observes that editions published by the House of Folk Creativity in 1957 and 1960 associated Juma with the Gakh district (Garayev, 1961:3).

Garayev's article is therefore important for the history of Molla Juma studies, but its geographical attribution should be treated cautiously. The later newspaper materials cited below provide evidence supporting the Sheki/Nukha attribution; however, this article presents that evidence as part of an ongoing historiographical discussion rather than as grounds for dismissing all alternative accounts categorically.

The manuscripts, which were first revealed by Nasreddin Garayev, were later extensively researched by folklorist Pasha Efendiyev in the mid-1960s. Nasreddin Garayev writes about Juma's new manuscript: "In recent years (the early 1960s, specifically) several manuscripts of Molla Juma have been included in the Republican Manuscripts Fund of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences. In one of these documents, it is written: 'This notebook was written in 1333. Molla Juma ibn Saleh of Kitabab. It is known from this note, dated 1914, that this manuscript is Molla Juma's autograph. While reviewing Molla Juma's poems stored in the fund, we come across such a passage in his "Admonition to My Son":

Min üz yüz otuz iki tarixdədir indi sənə,  
 Altmışa çatdı yaşı sevda sərə düşdü yenə.  
 Pozulub bürc bədən, üstən gedir gündən - günə,  
 Tapşırır Molla Cümə, oğul, sənə dönə-dönə,  
 Sıd q ilə yaxşı tutub, göz yetir dəftərə Həsən,  
 Yazdıgım bu dəftəri saxla yadigarənə Həsən (Garayev, 1961:3).

It is now the year one thousand three hundred and thirty-two,  
 I have reached sixty, yet love has entered my heart again.  
 The fortress of the body weakens day by day,  
 Molla Juma entrusts this to you, my son, again and again,  
 Hasan, keep careful watch over this notebook in good faith,  
 Preserve this notebook I wrote as a keepsake, Hasan.

On the basis of the manuscript note and the poem quoted by Garayev, the source associates the year 1332 AH with Molla Juma at the age of sixty and uses this information to support an estimated birth year of 1854 (Garayev, 1961:3). This calculation is suggestive rather than conclusive and should be considered together with the other biographical evidence discussed below.

At the end of the article, the couplets "Adam's Grandson" ("Adəmin nəvəsi") and "You're angry" ("Küsübsən") of the famous poet-lover are presented to the readers for the first time.

Jahangir Gaziyeu's article "Some Notes About Molla Juma" provides a more detailed biographical account. Published in the same year as Garayev's piece, it identifies Molla Juma as the son of Saleh and states that he was born in 1854 in Ashagi Layisqi, Nukha district (Abbasov, 1967:4). It also discusses his family background, early education, knowledge of Arabic and Persian, and the beginning of his poetic activity. Read comparatively, the two articles illustrate how the newspaper participated in an evolving discussion about Molla Juma's biography.

Gaziyeu's article also contributes information about Molla Juma's performance practice, relations with other ashigs, and circulation of his poetry in oral settings. Such details are valuable because they connect the biographical record with the social environment in which ashig poetry was performed and transmitted.

The newspaper materials also preserve poetic examples that the cited authors regarded as little known or unpublished at the time. These items are significant for documenting the transmission

history of Molla Juma's repertoire, although any claim that a poem was "not recorded anywhere" should be understood as limited to the evidence available to the newspaper author and not as an absolute bibliographical conclusion.

Bu iş tanrıdır, deyil insandan.  
 Bir gözələ mehribandır ürəyim.  
 Dilimin əzbəri İsmi Pünhandan.  
 Eylər möhnət, qəm hicrandır ürəyim.

Bir dərd əhli heç tapmadım burada,  
 Nahaq yerə rüsvey oldum arada,  
 Nə ölmədim, nə yetmədim murada.  
 Ah çəkməkdən qızıl qandır ürəyim (Gaziyev, 1961:4).  
 This is God's doing, not man's.  
 My heart is devoted to a beauty.  
 Her secret name is ever on my tongue.  
 My heart bears longing, grief, and separation.  
 I found no fellow sufferer here;  
 I was disgraced without cause.  
 Neither did I die nor attain my desire;  
 From sighing, my heart bleeds red.

Another important contribution of the newspaper is its documentation of efforts to identify an authentic image of Molla Juma. Mahyeddin Abbasov's 1967 article "Precious Find" describes the search for a photograph in connection with a proposed bust and memorial plaque. According to the article, investigators traced a 1912 group photograph through acquaintances in Balakan and Zagatala and then sought corroboration from Molla Juma's daughter, Reyhan, and elderly residents of Ashagi Goynuk and Bash Layisqi (Abbasov, 1967:3). The evidential value of the article lies less in the dramatic narrative of the search than in its record of how the image was identified and locally authenticated.

Abbasov reports that Reyhan produced another photograph of her father and that elderly residents recognized Molla Juma in the group image. The newspaper therefore presented the identification as confirmed by both family testimony and community recognition (Abbasov, 1967:3). This remains a newspaper account of the verification process and should be treated as documentary evidence of contemporary identification rather than as a substitute for independent archival authentication.

A further contribution is Movlud Yarekhmadov's article "Molla Juma," published on May 5, 1969. It repeats the 1854 birth date and Ashagi Layisqi attribution and provides additional material concerning "İsmi Punhan," Molla Juma's concealed beloved, as well as references to family members and poetic texts (Yarahmadov, 1969:3). These details expand the newspaper record, although they should be distinguished from independently verified biographical facts.

The reference to Molla Juma's brother Hamid and the additional poetic texts are noteworthy because they preserve information that, according to the article, was not widely incorporated into later educational treatments of Azerbaijani oral literature. Their value lies primarily in documenting what the newspaper circulated to regional readers at the time.

Literary critic Kamil Adishirinov likewise draws attention to uncertainty surrounding the identity of "İsmi Punhan." He notes that folklorists have not reached a unanimous conclusion and interprets the concealment of the beloved's name in relation to nineteenth-century social conventions governing references to women in Nukha (Adishirinov, 2023:16). This later interpretation illustrates why the newspaper evidence should be read together with subsequent scholarship rather than treated as self-sufficient proof.

A 1970 Sheki Fahlesi article titled "Molla Juma" likewise emphasized the need for a comprehensive study of the poet-ashig's life and creative legacy. The newspaper noted that 162 poems

had been published in booklet form but argued that further collection, research, and dissemination of his heritage remained necessary (Mulla Juma, 1970:4).

Read in context, this appeal is significant because it shows the newspaper acting not only as a vehicle for publication but also as an advocate for the preservation and scholarly study of Molla Juma's legacy. Later collection and publication initiatives mentioned in the article further illustrate the interaction between regional cultural memory, community support, and formal folklore scholarship.

### 3.3. *The Sheki Ashig Milieu and Soviet Ideological Influence*

The newspaper record also contains broader evidence of ashig activity in Nukha/Sheki. Issues from January 1938 mention a number of local performers, including Ashig Pasha, Ashig Kerim, Ashig Mugum, Ashig Ahmed, Ashig Shamil, Ashig Musa, and others (Nukha Fahlesi, 1938:2). The participation of Nukha ashigs in the Second Congress of Ashigs in Baku in March 1938 and the report on a local ashig conference provide additional documentary support for the existence of an active performance environment.

Later scholarship is broadly consistent with this newspaper evidence. Yashar Garayev describes the twentieth-century ashig tradition in Sheki and its villages as strong, while Laman Vagifqizi likewise identifies Sheki as a region in which ashig art developed widely (Garayev, 2009:33; Vagifqizi, 2012:116). These later assessments do not eliminate historiographical disagreement, but they reinforce the value of the newspaper materials as evidence of regional ashig activity.

The existence of an ashig milieu in Nukha is further confirmed by the article "Conference of Nukha Ashigs," published by writer-journalist Mammadiya Suleymanli in the March 10, 1938 issue of the newspaper "Nuxa Fahlesi." The author notes that the conference held on March 4, 1938 provided a comprehensive overview of this field, and emphasizes that the speech delivered by writer Ali Faruq was of great importance in addressing existing gaps (Suleymanli, 1938:2)

The newspaper materials also show how Soviet ideological expectations entered published ashig poetry. Poems such as Ashig Mugum's "Yashasin" and Ashig Piri's "Kolkhoz" praise socialism, collective farming, workers' and peasants' unity, and Leninist political language (Aşıq Müğüm, 1938; Ashig Piri, 1938). Rather than reading these poems only as spontaneous expressions of political conviction, they should also be situated within the publication environment and ideological conventions of the period.

Ölkəmizdə sosializm qurulmuş,  
Azad hüquq, yeni həyat görmüşük.  
Fəhlə-kəndli, biz əl-ələ vermişik,  
Lenin qoyan doğru yollar yaşasın (Aşıq Müğüm, 1938:3)

Socialism has been built in our country,  
We have seen equal rights and a new life.  
Workers and peasants, we have joined hands;  
Long live the true path laid down by Lenin.

In the poem "Kolkhoz" by Ashig Piri, the collective farm system was applauded and the leading power of Lenin's party was glorified:

Partiyamız bizə rəhbərlik edir,  
Sovet xalqı Lenin yolu ilə gedir.  
Bir-birilə yaxın qardaşlıq edir,  
Kəndimizdən səsi gəlir kolxozun (Ashig Piri, 1938:3).

Our Party guides us,  
The Soviet people follow Lenin's path.  
They live together in close brotherhood;

The voice of the collective farm rises from our village.

Ashig Musa, one of the representatives of the ashig milieu in Sheki during the 1920s–1950s, learned the secrets of the ashig art from Molla Juma in his adolescence. Like many of his contemporaries, his poetry was also shaped by the demands of Soviet ideology. Although the theme of nature, one of the central motifs of ashig poetry, occupied an important place in his work, ideological influences are evident even in poems devoted to this subject. In this regard, Ashig Musa's poem "Spring" is particularly noteworthy.

Bahar çağı, xoş zamandır, yoldaşlar,  
 Bülbüllər oxuyur, güllər açılmış.  
 Gözəllər geyinib qırmızı donu,  
 Xoş danışır, şirin dillər açılmış (Aşıq Musa, 1938:3).  
 Spring has come; what a pleasant season, friends.  
 Nightingales are singing and flowers are blooming.  
 Young women have put on their red dresses;  
 Sweet words flow from smiling lips.

In Ashig Musa's "Spring," conventional images of nature and seasonal renewal are followed by explicitly political references. This shift illustrates the coexistence of traditional lyrical motifs and Soviet ideological vocabulary within published ashig poetry.

Çox gözəl zamana, gözəl dövrandır,  
 Düşmənlərin ürəkləri xallandı,  
 Azadlıq verilib, çadra tullandı,  
 Hər tərəfdə ipək tellər asılmış (Aşıq Musa, 1938:3).

What a beautiful time, what a beautiful age;  
 Our enemies' hearts are troubled.  
 Freedom has come; the veil has been cast aside,  
 Silken tresses are visible on every side.

### 3.4. Continuity of Ashig Performance and Local Cultural Institutions

The historical record extends beyond individual newspaper articles. Salman Mumtaz's notes on prominent ashigs include Ashig Pasha of the Dodu settlement of Sheki among recognized performers of the period (Salman, F-24, storage unit 88). When read alongside the newspaper materials, these records help situate the local performers in a wider history of Azerbaijani ashig culture.

Taken together, the materials indicate that the newspaper repeatedly served as a platform for reporting on ashig art and publishing poetry by local performers. Later issues continued this function through contributions by figures such as Ashig Hajibala, Ashig Ismayil, and Ashig Sakit.

The article "He Inspires Me," published on August 20, 1970, records Ashig Hajibala Ibrahimov's recollection of seeing Molla Juma perform and describes Molla Juma as an important source of artistic inspiration (Ibrahimov, 1970:4). The value of this text lies in its first-person memory of performance practice and in the way it links intergenerational transmission with the cultural life of Sheki.

Bülbül mövsümündə gülünü səslər,  
 Bostançı tağında şamama bəslər,  
 Hər kim ki, Cüməni sınamaq istər,  
 Axırda əlinə əl verib gedər (Ibrahimov, 1970:4).

The nightingale calls to its rose in season,  
 The gardener tends the fruit upon the vine.  
 Whoever wishes to put Juma to the test,  
 In the end will offer him a hand in respect.

The same article records Hajibala Ibrahimov's recollection that seeing Molla Juma perform awakened his interest in music and ashig art. Although Ibrahimov worked for decades as a tractor driver, he states that he continued to carry his instrument and perform at collective-farm clubs and weddings (Ibrahimov, 1970:4). This testimony is useful because it shows how ashig practice continued alongside ordinary working life and how Molla Juma functioned as an intergenerational model for later performers.

Azadlıq bəxş olub Azərbaycan,  
İyirmi səkkiz aprel, bir may günündə.  
İnsanlar çatıb şöhrətə-şana,  
İyirmi səkkiz aprel, bir may günündə (Ibrahimov, 1970:4).

Freedom has been bestowed on Azerbaijan,  
On the twenty-eighth of April and the first of May.  
People have attained honor and renown,  
On the twenty-eighth of April and the first of May.

The continuation of Molla Juma's legacy was not limited to male performers. A 1984 article on the "Juma" ensemble describes women performers, including Pari Asgarova, Guljan Taghiyeva, and Kifayat Ismayilova, participating in saz performance and concert programs ("Friday" ensemble of ashigs, 1984:4). This material broadens the newspaper's representation of the ashig tradition and shows its institutional presence in local cultural houses and ensembles.

### 3.5. Folk Dance, Performance, and Cultural Memory

The newspaper also documented organized folk performance beyond the ashig tradition. Sevinj Hasanova's 1985 article "Regarding Folk Creativity" discusses the "Zorkhana" folklore dance ensemble and its role in presenting folk music, games, and dances associated with regional customs (Hasanova, 1985:4). The account emphasizes the staging of local traditions for public audiences and the ensemble's place within Sheki's organized cultural life.

Hasanova's account traces the ensemble's public activity to the mid-1950s and reports recognition at republican festivals in 1956 and 1957 (Hasanova, 1985:4). These details are important not simply as performance history but as evidence of how local traditions were institutionalized and presented to mass audiences during the Soviet period.

In 1990, Ashig Sakit Kocheri introduced the column "Folk Creativity - Juma Fountain," which aimed to present local folk poets and ashigs and to connect contemporary performers with the legacy of Molla Juma (People's creativity - Friday spring, 1990:4). The column's programmatic statement frames folk creativity as a living regional tradition that should be identified, preserved, and transmitted. Its short life, ending with the newspaper's closure in 1991, also reflects the economic disruption of the period.

### 3.6. Children's Games and Anecdotes

In its final years, Sheki Fahlesi also addressed children's folk games and concerns about the loss of local traditions. Bahram Nutvali oglu's article "Let's Play Diredoyme," published under the rubric "Let's Keep Our National Games Alive," lists games remembered as popular among children and adolescents and calls for their preservation (Folk creativity - Friday spring, 1990:4). Some broader historical claims made in that newspaper article about the origins or international diffusion of particular games require independent verification; in the present study they are treated as examples of contemporary heritage discourse rather than established historical fact.

The educational framing of these game-related articles is also significant. The newspaper presents traditional games as vehicles for physical skill, endurance, courage, attention, and social memory, thereby linking recreation with cultural education.

Anecdotes formed another part of the newspaper's folklore repertoire. Items published in a "Molla Nasreddin" style used humor and satire to comment on everyday social behavior. Telman

Hamidli's "Fatma Is Coming, Run," for example, is discussed in relation to a folk-tale variant, while "I'll Go Out Myself" uses comic irony in a story about a dismissed salesman (Nutvali oglu, 1990; Hamidli, 1990). These examples show the newspaper functioning not only as an archive of inherited folklore but also as a medium through which folkloric forms were adapted to contemporary social commentary.

#### 4. Conclusion

The materials examined in this study show that Sheki Fahlesi and its predecessor titles were important regional sources for the documentation and circulation of folklore. Across the cited issues, the newspaper published material on ashig performers and poetry, Molla Juma's biography and reception, folk ensembles and dances, children's games, anecdotes, and related aspects of local cultural life.

The strongest contribution of the newspaper record is its cumulative evidence concerning the Sheki ashig environment and the regional reception of Molla Juma. At the same time, the sources demonstrate that newspaper evidence must be read critically: some items preserve first-person testimony or contemporary documentation, whereas others reproduce interpretations, ideological language, or claims that require comparison with independent scholarship. The historical value of the corpus therefore lies both in the information it contains and in what it reveals about the cultural and political contexts in which folklore was represented.

By bringing these dispersed materials together, the study contributes to the history of Azerbaijani regional folklore research and demonstrates the usefulness of periodicals as sources for cultural history. Further research could expand the corpus through a systematic issue-by-issue survey and compare the Sheki materials with folklore coverage in other regional newspapers.

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#### Author Contributions

Turkana Ibrahimova: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of results, writing the original draft, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

#### Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

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### Information about the autor

**Turkana Tofiq Ibrahimova** – Candidate of Philological Sciences at Azerbaijan University of Tourism and Management, Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku city, Abay Kunanbayev street - 45-51, building 7c. E-mail: [ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimovaturkana.86@gmail.com); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1392-9472>