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Book Review

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Anthology of Poetry by Women in Azerbaijan
Edited by Shahla Naghiyeva and Alison Mandaville
Azerbaijan, 2014
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In December 24, 2014 was a presentation of a book of the Anthology of "Poetry by Women in Azerbaijan" selected works of the Azerbaijani women writers from to different historical periods presented in both languages- Azerbaijani and English accompanied by the illustrations and archival photographs expressing national colour published by Sonmaz Mashal Cultural Relations Public Union project team under the financial support of UNESCO with co-editorship of Alison Mandaville, American poet-translator and Shahla Naghiyeva, Professor of the Department of Literature of Foreign Countries. The ceremony was organized at the American Center of Information Resource Complex of Azerbaijan University of Languages-a co-sponsor of the project.

Chairwoman of Sonmaz Mashal Cultural Relations Public Union, Professor of the Department of Literature of Foreign Countries Shahla Naghiyeva noted that the book includes selected works of Azerbaijani classical poets, poetry samples, since the second half of the XIX century, when oil "boom" started in Baku before the 1920s, as well as selected poems of women who lived and worked in the Soviet era. She mentioned that after translation from Azerbaijani into English Alison Mandeville, instructor of California State University, Fresno in the USA made editing works. S. Naghiyeva stressed that the book was the result of the long-term hard work since the original poetical samples included in it had been placed side-by-side with their English translation presented with colored illustrations created specifically for the project.

Anthology of "Poetry by Women in Azerbaijan" reflects the poetic perceptions and feelings, wishes and aspirations, and deep literary vision of Azerbaijani women. Included here are selections of poetry by women the ingenious poetesses were the most advanced

representatives of Renaissance of Azerbaijan for their personality and creativity. Mahsati Ganjavi who was born in Ganja, in one of the cultural centers of Azerbaijan, had got brilliant education of her time, knew the Arabic and Persian Languages very well and the talented poetess gained big popularity at court of Seldzhuksky sultan Sadzhar.

Anthology of Poetry by Women in Azerbaijan

Edited by Shahla Naghiyeva and Alison Mandaville



Azərbaycan qadın şairlərinin poeziya antologiyası

Redaktorlar: Şahla Nağıyeva və Əlison Məndəvil

Mehseti is the first Azerbaijani poetess, chess-player, prominent musician and the first female Azerbaijani composer. Her ghazals have a special place in the poetry of classics of medieval renaissance of Azerbaijan.

Khurshidbanu Natavan is considered one of the best lyrical poets of Azerbaijan whose poems are in Persian and Azerbaijani. Daughter of Mehdi Gulu-khan, the last ruler of the Karabakh khanate (1748-1822), Natavan was most notable for her lyrical ghazals. Her name Khurshid Banu is from Persian and means "Lady Sun." Her first name Natavan also comes from the Persian and means "powerless". Natavan was born on August 15, 1830 in Shusha, a town in present-day Nagorno-Karabakh. Being the only child in the family and descending from Panah Ali Khan, she was the only heir of the Karabakh khan, known to general public as the "daughter of the khan."

Gulshad Late 16th or early 17th century Gulshad, who is known only by her "Tasnifi Gulshad" (Works by Gulshad) lived between the end of the sixteenth and the first half of seventeenth centuries. Her only remaining piece is considered to be one of the best reflections of the people in her region who led a very hard life, including many who were displaced, often taken away from their parents and relocated to distant places:

Here comes a caravan of the ill-fated ones

—I call to you: Hey, Mewlana!

Hey Gani!

Young and old were dressed in black,

Give our regards to the land of Ajam!

figures a larger landscape of political dislocation and exile, from Europe to Africa, to Asia.

Loss and longing for the homeland echoes throughout this collection, as it does in the poems by Ummugulshum, an early twentieth century poet who was exiled to and died in Siberia along with her husband during Stalin's purges of the 1930s. In the poem "Parting" she writes, "I fade, turn pale in foreign lands."

Gonchabayim was born around 1827 in Nakhchivan, into Ehsankhan's family.

Ashug Pari (1811–1847) was a prominent figure in early nineteenth century ashug poetry. She appears to have lived first in the village of Maralyan on the banks of Araz River, moving in about 1830 to the town of Shusha, where she spent the rest of her life. Ashug Pari wrote lyrical poems in ashug poetry style.

Heyran Khanum (1790–1860) An outstanding poet living from about 1790 to 1860, Heyran Khanum is considered one of the most talented members of the Fizuli school of literature. She used different forms (bahrs) of Aruz meter and syllabic verse in her poetry. Her divan, consisting of 4500 couplets in Azerbaijani and Persian, helps suggest some information about her biography.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Oil Boom era, people like Hamida Javanshir, who founded the first co - educational school in Azerbaijan, and Natavan, who strongly promoted the education of girls and the cultural and civic participation of women, had already ensured that the seeds of gender equity in education, creativity, and civic participation had been sown.

Perhaps in good part because of this early civic and gender activism, throughout the twentieth century Azerbaijanis have perceived women as playing a lengthy and absolutely central role in the region's social and cultural spheres.

As noted by Ms. Gunay - Clearly, the beautiful literary heritage produced by women in Azerbaijan is not limited to the poems, albeit unique included in this anthology. To offer readers a representative picture of this body of work, we have selected poems for this collection that are considered in Azerbaijan as the best pieces by women who are among the most distinguished figures in the region's literature.

This is not to say it is easy today for women in Azerbaijan to be a writer or poet. According to Azerbaijani government statistics, 67% of women work for wages. Regardless of whether they also hold wage -earning jobs, women have primary, if not complete responsibility for household management, food preparation, and childcare. Women work hard — at their jobs by day, at home by night. For these statistics and more information on women's lives in Azerbaijan today, see Alison Mandaville's article "Beyond Bread and Buses: Women and Work in Azerbaijan in the 21st Century" (Journal of Azerbaijani Studies 12.4 (Fall 2009): 3-14).

Today's Azerbaijan is the economic, social and military hub of the South Caucasus and will restore its territorial integrity. Then, as did their predecessors, the new Natavans will live in native Karabakh and find their ways into the hearts through their poetry.