

Zardabi's *Ekinchi* and Modern Azerbaijan

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Azerbaijan celebrates its National Press Day on 22 July every year. Every educated Azerbaijani knows that this day is attributable to *Ekinchi*, Hasan Zardabi's newspaper. And Zardabi is also referred to as the founding father of the press in school history textbooks. Those engaged in Zardabi's creative work agree that after Mirza Fatali Akhundzade, Zardabi was one of Azerbaijan's brightest enlighteners, thinkers and patriotic intellectuals who promoted science and education, and who fought to free the people from the influence and pressure of religious superstition.

But with whom did Zardabi have to fight in order to enlighten the people of Azerbaijan and spread progressive ideas? Whose support did Zardabi need to publish and distribute the first Azerbaijani newspaper? To whose example did Zardabi refer in his struggle for the enlightenment of the people? To what extent does what is written about Zardabi today correspond to Zardabi's thoughts and views? In this article, I will try to clarify how the ideas developed in *Ekinchi* by Zardabi are presented in modern Azerbaijan and to what extent this presentation corresponds to Zardabi's ideas. I would also like to note that the terms *Azerbaijan*, *Azerbaijani language*, and *Azerbaijani* used in this article are alien to the end of the 19th century, substituting *Baku* and *Yelizavetpol governorates*, *Turkish language* and *Muslims*, respectively.

The content of *Ekinchi*

On 22 July 1875, Zardabi launched *Ekinchi*, and on 29 September 1877, its last issue appeared.[\[1\]](#) Zardabi's fellow writers were mostly Azerbaijanis, but there was an Armenian author who collaborated with the newspaper: Khachatur Gorkhmazov, who worked as a translator for the consulate in Kars. Furthermore,

there were two Armenians, Minasov, who assisted Zardabi in publishing the newspaper and typesetting Arabic letters, and his teenage relative, who assisted him in the printing of the newspaper.[\[2\]](#)

Zardabi had for many years campaigned for the publication of the newspaper. But this struggle had nothing to do with obtaining permission to publish the newspaper from the Tsarist government as many think. On the contrary, Zardabi repeatedly expressed his gratitude to Dmitry Staroselsky, the governor of Baku, for his material and moral support for the publication of the newspaper. Zardabi wrote that he faced three obstacles in publishing the newspaper. First, he needed to find a specialist, i.e., a censor, who would read the Azerbaijani text and give an opinion as to whether the government would find it objectionable. This rule was valid for all newspapers and was not intended for Zardabi personally. Staroselsky helped him by agreeing to serve as the newspaper's censor.[\[3\]](#) Secondly, Arabic script typeset could not be purchased in the Russian Empire; they had to be ordered from Istanbul. Thirdly, financial means were needed to publish the newspaper, which was Zardabi's most painful problem because rich Azerbaijanis did not want to give money. Anticipating that these problems would continue, in the first issue of the newspaper Zardabi addressed "understanding Muslims" and asked them not to create obstacles for the people to read this newspaper because he planned to talk about "important" issues.[\[4\]](#)

In that first issue Zardabi touched on the issue of making butter from cow's milk and talked about the serious mistakes made by cattle farmers. These mistakes allow us to understand the issues about the daily and social life of an Azerbaijani peasant that were never written in history books or discussed publicly. Zardabi wrote: "The Azerbaijani cattle breeder does not know how and under what conditions to keep livestock, how to make butter from cow's milk, and therefore he earns poor or no profit from cattle or the livestock die. The main reason for this is that the peasant is not a good observer, is not

creative in his daily work, cannot draw conclusions from mistakes and does not observe hygiene." In the second issue of the newspaper, Zardabi dwelt on the rules followed during the production of butter in the Holstein province, hygiene issues, and explained how the people of Holstein adapted butter production techniques to the climatic conditions as a result of observation. Zardabi presents another example, silkworm breeding, in which the author compares the social life of Muslims and Christians. According to him, because the mulberry tree grows wild in Azerbaijan, the peasant does not know how to cultivate it. But because this tree does not grow wild in cold countries, people have found the ability to scientifically cultivate it properly and profitably. Zardabi addresses Muslims, asking: "O brothers, are we really to learn to grow our own mulberry tree from strangers?" [5] Zardabi's remark implies that peoples living in areas with favorable climatic conditions became passive and less creative.

The second problem Zardabi notes about rural Azerbaijan was the indifferent attitude of the population towards nature. Zardabi wrote: "Just as the heir of a rich man plunders his wealth, a Muslim does not appreciate the environment in which he lives, constantly cutting down trees and destroying forests. Recalling the importance of forests for the purity of air, water resources and agriculture, Zardabi encouraged Azerbaijani peasants to plant forests. [6]

Ekinchi draws parallels between Armenians and Azerbaijanis while touching on the social problems of Azerbaijani provinces, as if trying to shake Azerbaijanis out of an inertia by creating rivalry between the two neighboring nations. On 22 December 1876, the newspaper reported that "there are two million Muslims in the Caucasus, but they cannot afford to support one newspaper, while half a million Armenians have four newspapers and four magazines." [7] The 30 January 1876 issue of the newspaper reported that Armenian residents from the Gilvar village at Guba opened a school at their expense and appointed a teacher to the school, who

taught children in Armenian and Russian. The residents also founded a theater and collected donations to support poor Armenian families. With this story, Zardabi, by comparison, emphasized the reluctance of wealthy Azerbaijanis to donate and mocked them by noting that a Russian imperial official, Kazlyakovsky, the district chief (*uyezdnyy nachalnik*), was providing assistance to starving Azerbaijani villagers.[\[8\]](#)

Zardabi, turning to the subject of education and science, spoke of the newspaper's significant role in disseminating scientific information, and raised an interesting issue: the spoken language of the educated population at the closing of the 19th century. Zardabi wrote that many newspapers were published in Turkish in the Ottoman state, but "opportunities to disseminate them in our hometown are limited because "our population speaks Persian," so the Persian newspaper *Ahrar* published in Istanbul would probably have many customers from Azerbaijan.[\[9\]](#) In another section of *Ekinchi*, pointing to the spoken language of the population, he wrote that "the entire population in Irevan province cannot read Turkish."[\[10\]](#) These records confirm that Persian was the spoken language of educated Muslims half a century after the occupation of the South Caucasus by Russia.

Zardabi was a Sunni, and perhaps for this reason he refrained from making comparisons between Sunnis and Shias. But despite this, some information published in the newspaper shows that there is a serious difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims in their attitude to science and education and progressive ideas. For example, Zardabi wrote that most of the newspaper's customers were from Guba, Derbend[\[11\]](#) and Dagestan. Among the places he called "our cities," the ones who bought the most newspapers were precisely the regions inhabited by Sunnis: "3 people from Karabakh, 3 from Shirvan, 3 from Sheki, 1 from Lankaran and 1 from Ganja."[\[12\]](#) In 1877, Zardabi, in an article about possibly closing the newspaper because of low readership, noted that there were only 119 readers, including 35 from Dagestan and Derbend, 20 from Russia, 1 Armenian

reader from Ganja, and 3 Russians out of 12 readers from Baku.[\[13\]](#) In an article about the pilgrimage to Mecca, Zardabi reported that Muslims do not know why they visit Mecca, and that they do not know the main purpose of the pilgrimage to Mecca, even if they consider themselves Muslims. He emphasized that the reason for this was ignorance.[\[14\]](#) *Ekinchi* wrote that the Muslim clergy from their pulpits called people with secular education and newspaper readers “unbelievers,” cursed them, and thus seriously damaged their public authority. According to Zardabi, they were trying to keep ordinary people away from education by intimidating them with godlessness and hell.[\[15\]](#)

Zardabi stressed that his main readers were peasants. According to him, in the year the newspaper was first published, half of its 600 readers were peasants,[\[16\]](#) and the chiefs of post offices (Zardabi called them ‘nachalnik post offices’) had a special service in delivering the newspaper to the villagers. By this Zardabi meant that 300 subscriptions were held in the provinces where they likely would have been read by a literate person in a public place for the illiterate to hear. Since there was no postal service in the villages, the delivery of the newspaper to the villagers was organized by the head of the post office at the request of the governor. This information confirms that those working in the Russian administrative system were interested in the involvement of the Muslim population in education and newspaper reading. The newspaper repeatedly wrote about the persistent refusal of Muslims to read, and the interest of the wealthy class and the clergy in keeping the people in superstition and darkness. The newspaper reiterated that when money was collected to open a gymnasium in Karabakh, Azerbaijani gentlemen did not want to financially support poor Azerbaijani children, but rich Armenians spent a lot of money to educate poor Armenian children.[\[17\]](#)

Ekinchi had an interesting answer to the question of how Muslim nobles (Zardabi called them *beyzades*) were spending

their money. The article suggested they wasted their wealth on gambling, on hosting an Ivan Ivanich, on donating an expensive gift or horse to some official Russian, or on charity for an Imam. "God would accept this donation, but God would not accept the donation to the school built for the children of the poor."[\[18\]](#) Another issue of the newspaper reported that in 1877, fifteen thousand rubles were given to mourning houses in Baku (Badkubé).[\[19\]](#) *Ekinchi* noted that the Muslim ruling class called what was written in the newspaper "slander," and they in answer wrote letters full of slander to Russian officials and created obstacles to the opening of schools. These obstacles consisted of letters of complaint to the tsarist administrations, accusing Zardabi of threatening political security. The negative attitude of the Muslim ruling class towards Zardabi was not only related to his efforts to educate the common people. Zardabi's defense of the oppressed peasants under the harsh exploitation of landlords and his protection of their rights as a member of the provincial court, seriously worried the ruling class and the Tsarist officials.[\[20\]](#)

In its pages, *Ekinchi* presented the attitude of Muslims to science, education, and cultural affairs by confronting them with the views of the neighboring Armenian and Georgian peoples. The newspaper reported that the Armenian clergy directly conducted the work of spreading science and education among the people and played a leading role in negotiations with the tsarist administration regarding the issues of collecting funds, opening schools, and organizing education. The 27 May 1876 issue of the newspaper spoke of Armenian clerics' protest against the new rule[\[21\]](#) adopted regarding education in Russia and the change of the rule after this protest, and how Muslims could benefit from these changes.

Ekinchi attempts to explain the difference between Christianity and Islam by contrasting Eastern and Western values on a broader level. The newspaper wrote about the many differences between East and West, but the most important of them were related to science, education and freedom. *Ekinchi*

wrote that as long as the Western world did not know what freedom was, "it was more ignorant than the East." [22] *Ekinchi* also criticized the way Muslim society understood the concept of freedom, discussing freedom broadly for the first time: "We have become each other's slaves by our own request, believing the ransom of a slave is a reward for liberation. However, the serf is the slave of his king; woman is the slave of man; the child is the slave of his father; the servant is the slave of his master; the student is the slave of his teacher, aren't they?" Explaining this situation by alluding to the nation's traditions, *Ekinchi* focused on the serious consequences of the lack of personal independence in a Muslim family and reported that a son who is unaware of his own rights and obligations bends twice before those who are stronger than him, as he does in front of his father, while he does not consider the weak to be a person, just as his father does not consider him to be a person. *Ekinchi* underlined the importance of treating children as individuals, depicting the value of the spirit of freedom and personal independence. [23]

Ekinchi repeatedly criticized the fact that not only the Muslim clergy, but also the wealthy class opposed science, education, and newspapers in Azerbaijani society. Among the reasons for this, the Muslim elite's fear of being accused of disloyalty to the emperor and of opposing the Sharia were particularly emphasized. [24] These fears led wealthy Muslims to target educated and modern Azerbaijanis, slandering them and sending complaint letters to government offices. Addressing modern youth, *Ekinchi* urged them not to be afraid of the slanders and threats of the rich and the curses of the clergy. Addressing the wealthy Muslim population of the Caucasus, *Ekinchi* asked them for financial assistance and explained how the schools, libraries, and educational institutions to open with this assistance would change the lives of the Muslim people. In the end the newspaper admitted that this was a dream, but it emphasized that the Muslims themselves were the reason why these ideas remained an

unrealized dream.[\[25\]](#)

Ekinchi paid special attention to the relations between nations, called on people to live in friendship and brotherhood, addressed the Armenian issue in the Ottoman and Persian empires, pointing to the necessity of union, not discord. *Ekinchi* wrote that even if good is forgotten, evil is not forgotten, the suffering of one nation will definitely lead to a response from the other side, and that is why it is necessary to promote brotherhood among them.[\[26\]](#)

After the outbreak of the war between the Russians and Ottomans in September 1877, *Ekinchi* wrote that readers demanded pictures from the battlefield like those in Armenian newspapers, but Zardabi asked his readers how he might print a battlefield picture in a newspaper with limited financial resources? Tired of fighting with Muslim clerics who had been fighting against innovations for a long time, and Muslim gentlemen who didn't want to spend money on progressive things, *Ekinchi* closed the newspaper on 29 September 1877 with the following announcement: "Since we are ill, the last issues of this year will not come out on time, and it is not known whether they will at all." Thus, neither the conservative stance of the tsarist government nor the newspaper's sympathies for the Ottomans played a role in the closure of the newspaper, but it was closed because Muslims did not give money for it.

How Zardabi remembered *Ekinchi*

In late 1905 and early 1906, Hasan Zardabi wrote several articles about *Ekinchi*'s thirtieth anniversary for the newspaper *Hayat*.[\[27\]](#) In these articles, Zardabi described his attempts to spread education and culture among the Muslim population in the Caucasus, obstacles he faced in connection with the publication of *Ekinchi*, and the people who created these obstacles. Zardabi hailed the creation of Martasirakan, a charity organization, in 1864 by David Rostamyan, a doctor

working in Baku, and the initiative of a small number of Armenians in Baku to educate hundreds of poor Armenian children through this organization. With this initiative, Zardabi claimed to create a charity company for Muslims, and he admitted that he appealed to the wealthy families from Azerbaijan's richest cities of Baku, Shamakhi and Shusha, but all his attempts failed. [28] Emphasizing that the neighboring Armenians have made serious advances in science and education through charity organizations, and that wealthy Armenians provide material support to poor Armenian children, Zardabi wrote that he still keeps the notebook with his old plans to create a charity company and commitments from some notable figures. He admitted he was not surprised that there was not a single Baku millionaire's name in this notebook. What surprised him was Governor of Baku Staroselsky's signature in that notebook. Zardabi also cites Staroselsky's note in the notebook as an example: "As long as I am the Governor of Baku, it is my duty to give 100 rubles to the Muslim charity company every year." [29]

Zardabi did not think it correct that modern youth should connect the fact that Muslims are lagging behind in science compared to their neighboring Armenians and Georgians with the policies of the tsarist administration. Zardabi admitted that tsarism had imposed restrictions on the Muslim population, but he saw the main reason for the backwardness of Muslims not in restrictive laws, but in the lack of education of Muslims themselves, and criticized this: "The truth is that they wanted to push us forward, but we didn't want to go." Making only a small digression here, it is worth noting that tsarist Russia also imposed strict restrictive laws on Armenians. However, these measures faced serious resistance from both the Armenian clergy and the wealthy class, especially the Armenian Catholicos, and the administration was forced to compromise under these pressures.

Repeatedly recalling the deep difference between Armenians and Georgians, Zardabi said that these differences would cause

serious consequences in the future. Zardabi wrote that Muslims who disregard science and education will lose their property due to ignorance, work for their neighbors and become pack mules for their goods. In a series of articles published between January and February 1906, Zardabi touched on the issue of a common Turkic language, textbooks and books used in Muslim schools, emphasized that the books taught in schools do not teach science, and spoke of the importance of translating books that contain scientific achievements, and teaching different dialects of the Turkic language. [\[30\]](#)

Zardabi's sharing of his impressions of late 19th-century activity in 1905-1906 is significant for at least two reasons. First, it was the when the Russian empire experienced the first bourgeois revolution and serious changes in social life. Analyzing the position of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia in their new political conditions, Zardabi criticized those who opposed his progressive initiatives at the end of the 19th century and accused them of insincerity. Recalling that under the new conditions many of these former intellectuals at the head of charity companies once ridiculed his initiatives and submitted official complaints against him, Zardabi addresses those who yesterday opposed progress and today shout "Long Live", and asks: "'Are you really the ones who want to awaken sleeping Muslims?" [\[31\]](#)

The second important issue for interpretation of Zardabi's activity was that the first Armenian-Muslim conflict took place during 1905-6. Newspapers published information about the bloody clashes across Baku, Yelizavetpol, Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and Erivan. In a period of increasing tension between Armenians and Muslims, Zardabi in the pages of *Hayat* spoke of the good of neighboring Armenians (a sense of national unity, attitude to national history, respect for science and education), boldly expressed his views on the matter, and did not hesitate to show Armenians as an example for Muslims.

Zardabi and Modern Azerbaijan

The relationship between history and historical narratives is not the same as the relationship between the maker of history and the author of history. History has for many years been a tool both for those who write and read history and for those who not only reconstruct what happened in the past, but also for understanding what will happen in the future. On the other hand, understanding the future requires re-establishing adequate links between the past and the present. The goals, interests, and participants' capacity to critically analyze play an essential role in recovering this relationship.

Presenting historical information as historical narrative is one common way of linking the past to the present. The historian, presenting historical information as a narrative, uses all possible sources to make their narrative whole and complete and attractive. They compare information, identify differences and similarities between various sources, the period's peculiarities and present all of this to their reader. But the historian does not always include all the information they have read, all the information available to them in the historical narrative they create. They always have the option to choose, some of the information is contained in historical narratives and the other part remains in the shadows. Which information to include in historical narratives, and which to hide, may often not be motivated by the historian's personal interests. The era, the social environment in which the historian lived are some of the important factors that can influence their choices.

However, the most powerful tool that can influence the content of historical narratives is undoubtedly power. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, an American academic, in his book *Silencing the Past* talks about the role power plays in creating and writing history, and tries to understand reasons for a selective attitude to the past, and to explain why one period of history is well remembered by societies, while other periods are

forgotten.[\[32\]](#) This explanation suggests that in many cases researchers are confronted with power in relation to the politics of memory. However, power is one of the parties involved in the formation of collective or public memory, and the other party is society itself. What is the selectivity in the formation of public memory? Why are some historical events, personalities, processes mentioned in historical narratives more often and in detail, while others are either completely forgotten or mentioned incompletely?[\[33\]](#)

The reason we have raised in this article the issue of the role of power and society in the construction of history and the creation of historical narratives is because of the incomplete or distorted reference to Hasan Zardabi's legacy in contemporary Azerbaijan. In response to the question "Who is Hasan Zardabi?" most Azerbaijanis would answer: "the creator of the first newspaper in our language." It is undeniable that researchers engaged in his work have a deeper and better knowledge of him.[\[34\]](#) Azerbaijan celebrates its National Press Day on 22 July every year. For many years, the Azerbaijan Journalists Union has awarded the Hasan-bey Zardabi Prize to journalists distinguished by their activities annually on the eve of Press Day. A monument to Hasan Bey Zardabi has been erected on Beyuk Gala Street of Baku Old City, and one of the avenues in Baku is named after Zardabi. These symbols are considered important tools in the formation of social memory. However, it is undeniable that the cornerstone of memory policy is formed by schools and mass media. How is Zardabi's legacy remembered in history textbooks and Azerbaijani media, to what extent does this remembrance correspond to Zardabi's ideas and activities?

Public knowledge of Zardabi begins with the history of Azerbaijan in 9th grade. The 9th grade curriculum devoted to the creation of the national press and theater in the second half of the 19th century notes that Zardabi, as a result of three years of intense work, began the publication of *Ekinchi*

The textbook explains the closure of the newspaper with the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman war in 1877 and sympathy for the Ottoman state in the newspaper pages. [\[35\]](#) But the textbook does not mention Zardabi's merits in opening the first charity society and the first school for girls in Baku and organizing the first theater to financially support the demands of poor schools, staging for this purpose *Hajı Kara*, a play by M.F. Akhundzade, his role in the preparation of the first textbooks, arranging the first teachers' congress, and his activity in the Baku City Duma.

There are several reasons why the textbook provides incomplete information about Zardabi's heritage. But explaining the reason for the closure of *Ekinchi* with Zardabi's supposed sympathy for the Ottoman state is a distortion of the facts. *Ekinchi* criticized both the Ottoman and Persian states for a number of reasons. Zardabi's attitude towards the Russian government was ambiguous. It goes without saying that *Ekinchi* could not openly aim at the tsarist rule in its pages; therefore, *Ekinchi* tried to demonstrate an adequate political position vis a vis imperial power, addressing the Russian emperor as "his majesty" and "our emperor." *Ekinchi* also acknowledged the scientific and educational opportunities brought to the Caucasus by the Russian government, especially for the education of the Muslim population, and noted that the Russian administration had a positive impact on the Caucasus in general. Zardabi repeatedly noted that the closing of the newspaper was not at the hands of the Russian authorities, but rather because Muslims did not want to finance the newspaper. The designers of Azerbaijani history curriculum have preferred to remain silent about this fact.

The fourth volume of the seven-volume history of Azerbaijan, prepared by the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences Institute of History staff, details Zardabi's contribution to the development of natural sciences in Azerbaijan. It points to Staroselsky's support of Zardabi in publishing the first

newspaper, but like the 9th grade curriculum it argues that tsarist censors had the newspaper closed, which does not match Zardabi's own testimony.[\[36\]](#) The fifth volume of the series, unlike school textbooks, notes Zardabi's role in opening the first school for Muslim girls, in holding the First Congress of Caucasian Muslim teachers, his activities in the Baku City Duma, and his contributions to the charity company *Nashri-maharif* (Publishing-Education). However, Azerbaijani academics failed to demonstrate academic integrity in the analysis of the media, blaming not the Muslim ruling class and intellectuals, but the tsarist administration for the lack of press in the Azerbaijani language in the Caucasus at the end of the 19th century. [\[37\]](#)

In this section, I present the results of my analysis of a number of materials published in the periodical press over the last ten years to show how Zardabi's activities have been presented in the media as well as how they have been used in *Hasan Bey Zardabi-180*, an electronic digest published in 2022 by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture and the National Library of Azerbaijan in connection with the 180th anniversary of Zardabi's birth.[\[38\]](#) The compilers of the collection note that they have included articles they consider important published in the Azerbaijani press about Zardabi between 2018 and 2022. I analyze how Zardabi's attitude towards Russia, Iran, the Ottoman state, as well as education, religion and the Armenian issues were presented to modern Azerbaijani society in the press of the time and in the abovementioned collection.

Most of the articles dedicated to Zardabi found in *Hasan bey Zardabi-180* highlight similar ideas, and the articles do not differ much in content. Recurring ideas include what Zardabi wrote on the development of education, the opening of schools, and the establishment of charitable societies. However, these articles often distort Zardabi's views. For example, according to Aydyn Gasymlı in an article on Zardabi's relationship with

the Russian Empire, "Hasan bey Zardabi created the first Turkic-owned "Charity Society" and managed to get his program approved after much delay." However, this statement is not true because Zardabi approved the charter of the society for a short time but spent a lot of time collecting funds. And because he failed to raise the funds and could not report on the activities of the charity society in accordance with the law, he was forced to close the society.

In the introductory article of this collection dedicated to Zardabi's life and creative work, the author links *Ekinchi's* closure to Russia's reactionary occupying regime and the newspaper's description of the harsh living conditions of the peasantry. [39] *Ekinchi* repeatedly blamed the closure of the newspaper on the Muslim clergy and Muslim ruling class, whom the newspaper called *beyzades*. The newspaper also blamed Muslim landlords for the difficult living conditions of the peasants. However, the author of the article did not mention this well-known stance of the newspaper and instead, freely interpreted what Zardabi wrote, pointing to the tsarist administration as the culprit of all the problems.

Zardabi and the Armenian question, however, was the most distorted topic in the modern Azerbaijani press. Zardabi's opinion of Armenians and their culture were distorted in an article titled *Zardabi is the Torch of the Azerbaijani Press*, which appeared in *Turkustan* in 2020. In the article, the author links the closure of the *Ekinchi* newspaper to denunciations of the newspaper's typesetter Minasov, which is not true. In general, all the articles dedicated to Zardabi claim that Zardabi is a nationalist. Thus, Zardabi's internationalist stance on Armenians and other peoples across the Caucasus is omitted.

When Zardabi repeatedly called on Muslims to master science and get an education, emphasizing that love for the nation is about promoting education and one's native tongue, he cited Armenians as an example and urged Muslims to become like them.

At the same time, Zardabi wrote about the suffering of the Armenian community oppressed under the Ottoman state, how they fled to the Caucasus and sought refuge with local Armenian landlords.[\[40\]](#) Another attempt to distort Zardabi's legacy is made in the article *Hasan Bey Zardabi and National Press Day* published in *Kredo* in 2020. The author there explains that during the Soviet period, the teaching of Zardabi's heritage was limited to *Ekinchi* because he was religious. However, it is an undeniable fact that Zardabi, even he was a religious person, severely criticized religious institutions and clerics in his articles published in *Ekinchi* and other newspapers. On the other hand, as we have already seen, the presentation of Zardabi's legacy in modern Azerbaijan is also limited to *Ekinchi*.

In lieu of a final word

This article addresses (deals with) the issue of falsification and omission of important historical facts about Zardabi. Among those who distort the facts about Zardabi are scholars, public figures and journalists. It is not the purpose of this article to investigate why they distorted Zardabi's opinions and writings. However, it seems that many contemporary writers have forgotten the obstacles Zardabi named to the launch of *Ekinchi* and blame the newspaper's difficulties entirely all on the tsarist administration. As to the closing of the newspaper, Zardabi notes threats from Muslim clerical institution and the reluctance of the Muslim wealthy class to provide financial support; however, contemporary commentators cite Armenians, the Russian government, or *Ekinchi's* sympathy for the Ottomans as reasons for the newspaper's closure. Zardabi wrote about the indifference of Azerbaijani intellectuals to the fate of the people, education, and science, while modern writers speak of the struggle of Azerbaijani intellectuals for education and press. According to Zardabi, none of the Baku millionaires donated money to charity, they prevented him from living in Baku and hired foreigners, not him, while modern writers tell stories about

the friendship between Zardabi and Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev.

There are a number of reasons why Zardabi's opinions have been distorted in this fashion. His opinions can be verified by anyone who reads his regularly published and republished writings, but modern critics must believe that what they write will go unchecked by readers. The lack of development of critical thinking of Azerbaijani readers at any level of education provides a good basis for this. For this reason, Zardabi's words "Hey Muslims, start learning!" reminds us that the author is still relevant now as in his own time.

[1] This article uses the transliterated version of Ekinchi newspaper. See: Əkinçi 1875-1877. Tam mətni. Bakı: Avrasiya Press, 2005.

[2] Unfortunately, Zardabi did not mention Minasov's name either in Ekinçi or in Hayat newspaper.

[3] During his work in the Caucasus, Staroselsky gathered a wealth of knowledge about the language, religion, and culture of the peoples of the region, and organized the publication of several historical and geographical collections.

[4] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi 22 iyul, 1875.

[5] Əfəli Əhli Dehat, Əkinçi, 20 noyabr, 1876.

[6] Əkin və Ziraət Xəbərləri, Əkinçi, 21 avqust, 1875.

[7] Məktubat, Əkinçi, 22 dekabr, 1876.

[8] Məktubat, Əkinçi, 30 yanvar 1876.

[9] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 15 mart, 1876.

[10] Məktubat, Əkinçi, 18 yanvar, 1877.

[11] Zərdabinin bəhs etdiyi dövrdə Dərbənd Dağıstan vilayətinin tərkibinə daxil idi.

[12] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 11 iyun, 1876.

[13] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 2 fevral 1877.

[14] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 22 dekabr, 1876.

[15] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 11 iyun, 1876.

[16] When Zarbadi wrote that his main readers were peasants, it did not mean that peasants were educated and read newspapers. Usually educated people in the provinces read newspapers for peasants.

[17] Məktubat, Əkinçi, 22 dekabr, 1876; Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 2 fevral 1877.

[18] Məktubat, Əkinçi, 14 aprel 1877.

[19] Təzə Xəbərlər, Əkinçi 17 fevral 1877.

[20] Hənifə xanım Məlikova-Abayevanın xatirələri. Həsən bəy Zərdabi və Əkinçi. Bakı: Adiloğlu, 2005, s.20, 22.

[21] Under the new rule, the Russian language shall be taught in all schools and a separate inspector appointed to supervise the teaching.

[22] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 9 iyun 1877.

[23] Yenə orada.

[24] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 11 iyun 1876.

[25] Daxiliyyə, Əkinçi, 18 yanvar 1877.

[26] Məktub, Əkinçi, 20 noyabr, 1876.

[27] In this part, the original issues of Hayat newspaper kept in the library of the State Historical Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan were used.

[28] Cəmiyyəti xeyriyyənin binası, Həyat, 25 noyabr 1905.

[29] Rusiyada əvvəlinci türk qəzetəsi, Həyat, 28.12.1905.

[30] İttihadi-Lisan, Həyat, 11.01.1906; Orta dil, Həyat, 14.02.1906.

[31] Dil və din, Həyat, 8 yanvar, 1906.

[32] Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

[33] Hakimiyyət və yaddaş siyasəti ilə bağlı bax: Connerton, P. (1989). *How societies remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[34] On Zərdabi's heritage, see: H.Zərdabi. Seçilmiş əsərləri. Tərtib edən və qeydlər Z.B.Göyüşov, Bakı: Azərnəşr, 1960; Cavadova Esmira. Sətirlədə döyünən ürək. Bakı: Azərnəşr, 1988; Həsən bəy Zərdabinin Bakı Dumasında fəaliyyəti 1897-1907. Bakı: AMEA 2019;

[35] Azərbaycan tarixi. Ümumtəhsil məktəblərinin 9-cu sinifi üçün dərslik. Bakı: Şərq-Qərb, 2020, s.54-55.

[36] Azərbaycan Tarixi. 7 cildə, 4-cü cild. Bakı: Elm, 2007, ss.282, 283, 287-288,

[37] Azərbaycan Tarixi. 7 cildə, 5-ci cild. Bakı: Elm, 2007, ss.163-164, 167, 169, 187.

[38] Həsən bəy Zərdabi-180. Daycet. Bakı: 2022.

[39] Həsən bəy Zərdabi-180, s.5.

[40] Əkinçi, 18 avqust 1877.