



## BAKHSHIEV MISHI

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**BAKHSHIEV MISHI** (Baxşijəv Mişi in the Judeo-Tat Roman alphabet used in 1929-38; 1910, Derbent-1972, Makhach-Qaḷ'a), Judeo-Tat author. A shoemaker's apprentice at the age of 11 and afterwards a fisherman, he was sent in 1928 as a Komsomol (communist youth union) activist to study at a *rabfak* (pre-higher school for workers) in Krasnodar and then at the Moscow Institute for Land Utilization. Back in Daghestan, upon his graduation in 1936, he was entrusted in a short period with several minor posts in the local party-administration apparatus and accordingly settled in Daghestan's capital Makhach-Qaḷ'a. In 1941 shortly after the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, he joined the army as a front-line correspondent. Discharged in 1953 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, he was given the post of deputy-head of the propaganda department of the Daghestani party apparatus and in 1956 became the head of the Party Life department of the main Daghestani Russian-language newspaper *Dagestanskaya Pravda* and in a short time its deputy editor-in-chief. He remained in this position until 1969 when he had to retire officially because of his poor health but reportedly since it was decided that a Jew could not hold such a high post in a Muslim republic in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israel war.

Bakhshiev began to publish in the early 1930s, while studying in Moscow, first as a poet (collection of poems *'ri Komsomol* "To the Communist Youth Union," 1932). His poems of the 1930s are on the average level of the Judeo-Tat poetry of the time both formally (almost complete rejection of traditional folk-lore forms in favor of those adapted from the Russian poetry) and topically (the



nexus of topics reflecting the crisis of the traditional life structure of Mountain Jews tackled mainly as proofs of their becoming rooted in the Soviet reality). Bakhshiev's first major prose work was the novella *Puṣorəhuj tozə zindəguni* (Towards the new life, 1932). Patterned after Azarbaijani Soviet models, its plot unfolds against the background of the pre-revolutionary and early post-revolutionary years. His second novel *Vətəgəciho* (The fishermen, 1933) is set among the Jewish fishermen of his native town. Though impaired by straightforward didacticism, both novellas are distinguished by a skillful portrayal of the heroes. In the mid-1930s Bakhshiev debuted as a playwright too. His *Bəsḡuni igidho* (The victory of the heroes, 1936), which dealt with the Civil War in Daghestan, was the first heroic drama in Judeo-Tat. The drama *Xori* (Earth, 1939) delineated the unification of Mountain-Jewish kolkhozes with non-Jewish ones and the struggle of "retrograde elements" against it. The play in verse *Ṣoh Abbas vəhombol* (King 'Abbās and the porter, 1940) was based on folk-lore motifs. From the early 1930s on Bakhshiev was also engaged in literary translating from Russian. While with the army, Bakhshiev began to publish in Russian and it remained the second language of his writings for the years to come. However, he wrote in Russian only prose (collections: *Rasskazy o moikh zemlyakakh*, 1956; *Prostye lyudi*, 1958; *Zashumyat sady*, 1962; *Pust' uznayut lyudi*, 1970). Still in active service Bakhshiev published in 1950 his first post-war book *Odomohoj jəki* (Kith and kin), a collection of poems, stories and plays. His book *Odomihoj vatanmə* (People of my homeland, 1960) contained alongside eight stories and two pre-war plays the drama *Ġismət mərdə nəmərd nixuru* (The lot of a [real] man is not to be taken by a villain), a preliminary tackling of one of the plots of his magnum opus, the first Judeo-Tat multi-plotted novel *Xuṣəhoj ongur* (Bunches of grapes, 1963). Its main plot—a clash between the innovator in viticulture and those favoring old methods—is typical of the so-called "kolkhoz novel," widespread in literatures of the USSR in the 1950s-early 1960s. This plot is interwoven with several others: a family saga, a war plot, a picaresque plot, and the life story of the Judeo-Tat writer 'Aso'il Binaev (1882-1958) told mainly by means of flashbacks. The last theme contains criticism, though hesitant and indicating self-censorship, of aspects of the Stalin era. Bakhshiev's post World War II poetry (collected posthumously in *Mə xosdənym vəsalə* "I love the spring-time," 1976) largely remained on the same artistic level as his poetry of the 1930s. Topically it is characterized by a shift from Mountain Jewish to general Daghestani themes. His late drama *Dy dədəj* (Two mothers, published in *Vatan Sov timu* annual, 1965) which centers on a confrontation between a natural mother, a Russian Ashkenazi Jewess, and an adoptive one, a Mountain Jewess, is evidently the best Judeo-Tat play of



the post-World War II period.

Both the poetical and prose style of Bakhshiev is lucid and relatively simple. Hebraisms are present both in his prose and poetry. Though Bakhshiev tries to avoid Russianisms in his poetry, Russian loan-words and calques from Russian are present and, at times, abundant in the language of his prose.

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