
BOOK REVIEW

Boris Viacheslavovich Norik. *Bio-Bibliographical Dictionary of the Central Asian Poetry (the 16th and the first third of the 17th centuries)*. *Bibliotheca Islamica / Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts*, ISSN 2072–2540. Moscow: Mardjani Publishing House, 2011. 976 pp. ISBN 978-5-903715-50-3.

The monograph reviewed (hereinafter referred to as the Dictionary) of the student of Iranian culture from St. Petersburg, Boris Viacheslavovich Norik, is a logical and rather efficient sequel to his earlier study, (an unpublished Ph. D. thesis titled “Anthologies of Ḥasan Niḥārī and Muṭribī Samarqandī, as History Sources of the Written Culture of Mā warā’ al-nahr of

the 16th and the first third of the 17th centuries”, 2005). Just as the aforementioned thesis the Dictionary is an academic research at the junction of oriental source studies, history of literature and philology. So far the study of literature (primarily Persian literature) of this region and this time period was occurring in rather surgical fashion, and chiefly in the genre of artistic biography of certain prominent literary men. The emergence of this voluminous encyclopaedic Dictionary makes it possible to take a better look at the cultural life of the late Middle Age Central Asia and peculiarities of the “cultural work” in the region, at that time a part of a much broader cultural and civilizational area — the area of Persian language and Muslim book culture.

Structure of the Work

The Dictionary is a bio-bibliographical reference book of the *adīb*-poets of Central Asia of the first third of the 17th century and it includes the overall number of 577 biographical articles. These biographical articles, making up the major body of the text (Chapter 2, pp. 48–627), are preceded by Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 14–47), which give a general understanding of the history of the study of Mā warā’ al-nahr literature, of general directions of military and political history of Mā warā’ al-nahr of the 16th and the first third of the 17th centuries, and of peculiarities of literary life in this region within this timeframe.

One of the main virtues of the Dictionary has to do with the fact that biographical data about the poets are accompanied by the samples of their work, chiefly in Persian language as well as in Turkic and Arabic. All verse samples are supplied with interlinear translation made by the author of the Dictionary. In the vast majority of cases these samples, extracted from medieval anthologies (*tadhkira*), had never been published before.

The scholarly apparatus of the Dictionary includes an impressive Bibliography list (pp. 628–662; consisting of 428 titles altogether), List of Abbreviations (pp. 663–667), two Appendices (pp. 668–833), Glossary of Terms and Un-translated Words (pp. 834–

851), Index of Names and Dynasties (pp. 852–901), Index of Work Titles (pp. 902–911), Index of Geographical and Topographical Names (pp. 912–925), Index of Terms and Un-translated Words (pp. 926–937), Index of Quoted Verses (pp. 938–969), Index of Chronograms (*ta’rikh*) (pp. 970–972), and a Summary in English (pp. 973). The earnestness of the author's approach to the subject matter and his propensity to the meticulous hermeneutical study — which in and of itself strives to the most accurate interpretation of the text possible through the prism of the cultural fundamentals of the age and reconstructions of the cultural fundamentals through the interpretation of the text — are testified to by the reference and explanatory apparatus of the Dictionary, which includes 1,155 notes, many of which are rather detailed.

Appendix 1, “The Poets of Iranian and Indian Circle, Known in Mā warā’ al-nahr” (pp. 668–805), is constructed according to the principle employed for the body of the Dictionary (that is, biographical articles are arranged in alphabetical order), being its addition and extension. The reason why certain poets were not included into the main body and included into this section had evidently to do with the impossibility of binding it biographically to Mā warā’ al-nahr.