THE INTERPRETATION OF NIZAMI'S CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

Shared past and cultural legacy in the transition from the prism of national literature criteria



Rahilya Geybullayeva / Christine van Ruymbeke (eds.)

PETER LANG

This book fills a void in the field of pre-modern literature written in Persian. It is the first scholarly publication in English language on and around the poet Nizami Ganjavi written by important Western and Non-Western scholars, enriching the field with an awareness of their knowledge and research interests.

The multidisciplinary volume initiates a much-needed dialogue between the metropolitan and postcolonial academic points of view.

By the example of Nizami's poems it shows how different academic circles interpret Medieval authors in relation to modern-day national identity and national cultures. Unlike in Europe and USA, in the USSR citizenship and ethnicity, like two modern official different criteria of identity, became a stumbling block in the division of cultural heritage of the past. Irredentism is a central topic in the post–Soviet Union world and gives a voice to the peripheral rather than to the metropolis with its colonial arguments. The richness and usefulness of this volume is that the contributions that take this innovative standpoint are put side by side with others, which remain within the traditional literary analysis and examine Nizami's creative thoughts on human, society, women, or justice.

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We are confident that all the actors together have put their energy and hard work into producing this volume and also paid a wonderful tribute to the values upheld by the great Nizami from Ganja.

Preface

This book, the result of the conference on Nizami in modern interpretation (Baku, 2018: https://complit.ca/2017/11/12/cfp-the-interpretation-of-nizamis-cultural-heritage-in-the-modern-period/) examines how the literary-cultural heritage *of the medieval period can be interpreted within present-day theoretical concepts of national attribution* and spill over into multi-disciplinarity with ties to research in disciplines such as comparative literature, theory of literature, cultural history, postcolonial studies, area studies, and semiotics.

The topic encompasses questions of identity in cultural legacy, and of the interaction between *existing affinities and new identities*. These questions are examined through the prism of the literary tradition found within Nizami's creativity, or of national identity in the context of a shared past and its modern interpretation.

This volume is the third multi-authored collection on Nizami Ganjavi published within the last 50 years. This is an astonishingly small research output when compared to the importance of the poet-philosopher's oeuvre, who more than deserves a prominent place within world-literature. Nizami Ganjavi, who lived in present-day Azerbaijan in the second half of the twelfth century CE, earned his fame with five long narrative poems written in Persian. He lived in an especially rich cultural region and period and he has influenced generations of authors in the Persian-written sphere, stretching to the Ottoman and Mughal empires.

The editors' distinctive choices for the 37 participants to the volume gives it a unique depth and breadth and shows the vastness and richness of Nizami Ganjavi's work, heritage and influence. This is the first volume published in English, which gives such prominence to the non-Western European and non-Iranian scholarship on the poet. The voice and point of view of both eminent and young scholars coming from such diverse countries as Brazil, Finland, Italy, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, India complement articles written by Italian, French, German, Swiss, British, Canadian and Iranian researchers. At the same time, this is also a collection gathering scholars from diverse specializations, such as semioticians, medievalists, philosophers, historians, regional studies, post-colonial studies, specialists in literary studies and specialists on Nizami Ganjavi himself.

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