

CONTRADICTIONS AND ERRORS IN THE PREFACE AND NOTES OF NIZAMI'S WORKS COLLECTION IN FIVE VOLUMES

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In 1985 and 1986 the Moscow-based publishing house «Khudozhestvennaya literatura» had published a collection of works of the great Persian poet Nizami in five volumes¹. They contain the next works of Nizami - «The treasury of secrets», «Khosrow and Shirin», «Layla and Majnun», «Seven Beauties», and «Iskandername» in two volumes. On the title pages of all volumes is written «translated from Pharsi».

The preface of the edition belongs to Mirza Ibragimov, while all notes is authored by Rustam Aliyev. The preface of the first volume begins as «Nizami Gyandjevi, the glory and pride of Azerbaidjani people belongs to the giants of world literature, whose creativity is written in golden letters in the history of literary thought of mankind»².

In order to reveal the false nature of this unproven statements, let us refer to facts concerning Nizami, in foreign and Armenian sources.

In all French encyclopaedias we read:

1. «Nizami, one of the great poets of Persia, was born in the region of Rum (1140-1202)»³.
2. «Nizami, Persian poet (Gyandje, Caucasus, modern Kirovabad, 1141-1209)»⁴.
3. «Nizami (1140-1200), famous Persian poet»⁵.

English encyclopaedias:

1. «Nizami Gyandjevi (1140/41-1202/3), Persian poet born in Gyandja. Nizami is regarded by Persians as the greatest master ...»⁶.
2. «Nizami, greatest romantic poet in Persian literature who had introduced spoken and realistic style into Persian epic literature ... he was inspired by the epic poets Ferdowsi and Sanai, became first great Persian dramatic poet. Nizami earns admiration in the Persian-speaking countries for his original and clear style reflected by means of his fondness towards language, and his knowledge in philosophy and science makes his works crabbed for ordinary readers»⁷.

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¹ Nizami Gyandjevi, Collection of works in five volumes, vol.I, II, Moscow, 1985; vol.III, IV, V, Moscow, 1986 (in Russian).

² Nizami Gyandjevi, Collection of works, vol. I, p. 5.

³ Larousse universel en 2 volumes, t. 2. Paris, 1923, p. 372.

⁴ Petit Robert - 2, Dictionnaire universel des noms propres. Paris, 1988, p. 1291.

⁵ Dictionnaire encyclopédique Quillet, L-O. Paris, 1939, p. 3195.

⁶ Arberry A.J., «Classical Persian Literature», 1958. See The World of Knowledge Encyclopaedia, V. XVII, London, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland, 1971, p. 3965.

⁷ See The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, V, VII. Chicago, 1974, p. 312.

In Russian encyclopaedias:

«Nizami is the best Persian romantic poet (1141-1203), was born in Rum but bears the surname Gyandevi, since most of his life he spent in Gyandja (today Elizavetpol), where he died. About him see preface to different publications and translations: Hamer, Berlin, 1813; Bacher, Leipzig, 1871; Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum («Каталог персидских рукописей Британского Музея», London, 1881, t. I, p. 563)»⁸.

This is the picture regarding our topic in European encyclopaedias, and also in Russian ones, before the establishment of the USSR, when the borders of Armenia were violated and Armenian territories were part of the Russian empire, particularly Kars district, Karabağ, Nachidjevan, Javachkh were given to Turkey, Azerbaidjan and Georgia.

Probably, in order to justify this falsification, the Persian poet Nizami was made Azerbaidjani, the genius thinker of other people was given to the nomads who came from northern China, who had been established in this region only in the XI century and did not create their own script and literature.

It should be mentioned that due to the same approach in the notes to the Moscow volumes of Nizami Ferdowsi became also a Tadjik poet: «Ferdowsi (936-1020), great Tadjik-Persian poet, author of epos «Shahnameh» («Book of the Kings»)»⁹. In other publications we lack such definitions. In Encyclopaedia Robert - 2 we read: «Ferdowsi - Persian epic poet (940-1020)»¹⁰.

During the Soviet period numerous studies were written by Azerbaidjani and Russophone authors who state unanimously and without any proof that Nizami was the glory of nonexistent XII century Azerbaidjani literature. Partly such literature was published in Moscow¹¹.

Y. E. Bertels dedicated a voluminous study to the life and creativity of Nizami where he stresses that he was fluent in two languages - Persian and Arabic. He never mentions about the knowledge of mother tongue by the «genius» of Azerbaidjani literature, but only adds: «It is possible that besides these two languages of the Caliphate of the XII century Nizami knows some other languages. It would be unsurprising if the resident of Gyandja know some Georgian and Armenian. At last he could ask his friends for assistance for whom these languages were native»¹².

Nizami was Persian poet but he spent his whole life in Gyandja mostly populated by Armenians, especially part of the Armenian intellectuals of that same XII century were its natives.

⁸ Brockhaus F., Efron N. A., Encyclopaedic dictionary, vol. XXI, Saint-Petersburg, 1897, p. 58 (in Russian).

⁹ Nizami Gyandjevi, Collection of works, vol. IV, p. 360.

¹⁰ Petit Robert - 2, p. 644.

¹¹ See Nizami Gyandjevi, Epoch, life and creativity, "New in life, science, technics", scientific-popular series, Literature. 12.1991 (in Russian); Köroglü H. G., Nizami Gyandjevi (850 years from the birth), Moscow, 1991 (in Russian).

¹² Bertels Y. E., Nizami. Creative path of the poet, Moscow, 1956, p. 70.

Saint-Martin, the founder of Armenology in France, in the first volume of his fundamental study «Historical and geographical writings about Armenia» regards Gandzak as an Armenian city and says that the form Gyandja is used in colloquial speech, and that it is a big city in the province of Artsach of Armenia Major, whose name is derived from the Armenian word “gandz” - “treasure”, since the Armenian kings used to keep here their treasures¹³. Saint-Martin lists those who had conquered Gandzak but he never associates it with Azerbaidjan. But in the note of the Moscow edition we read: “Gyandja is the native city of Nizami, one of the ancient cities of Azerbaidjan. In the XII century Gyandja was the capital city of Azerbaidjan, and the political, economic and cultural centre of Transcaucasia, Near and Middle East. Gyandja was located five kilometres to the north-west of modern Kirovabad”¹⁴.

In 1997 in the USA was published the “Historical Atlas of the World”, which contains the map of 1140 of this region, but here such a mighty Azerbaidjani state never exists¹⁵.

Kirakos Gandzakeci, the XIII century historian, in his truthful account seldom mentions the province and the city of Gandzak. He associates a large number of representatives of Armenian literature of the late XI and first decades of the XII century with that city and never regards it as a territory of other country. He wrote that David son of Alavik, Grigor son of Tokaker, and great Hovhannes Sarkavag Imastaser were natives of Gandzak and adds: «All three are natives of Gandzak, as well as myself»¹⁶. He testifies also that Mkhitar Gosh, the well-known lawmaker, fabulist and great teacher of the XII century also was the native of Gandzak: «He comes from Gandzak, the famous and well-known by its scholarship, son of Christian parents who arranged him to study the Holy Writing, and when he became mature, ordained him a priestly rank»¹⁷.

In the XIX century and the first decades of the XX century, while Nizami was not yet made an Azeri without proof by the command of Soviet authorities, the Armenian thought honors him as a Persian poet. The great Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanyan, who was fond of Persian poetry, speaks about him as being Persian poet: «At the time when we were speaking about Orient and Persia, we talk about Ferdowsi, Saadi, Omar Khayyam, Nizami and similar greatest figures ...»¹⁸.

One could imagine how it was difficult for Avetik Isahakyan, another genius Armenian poet, to write in 1948, during the dictatorship of Stalin, the preface to the Armenian translation of «Layla and Majnun» and use the word Azerbaidjan, well aware that Nizami is never related to Azerbaidjani literature. But Isahakyan mentions who really was Nizami. He especially stresses the next: «Nizami wrote all his works in Pharsi on the cultural, worked, high language like in medieval Europe people wrote in Latin.

¹³ Saint-Martin J. A., *Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l'Arménie*, t. I, Paris, 1818, p. 150.

¹⁴ Nizami Gyandjevi, *Collection of works*, vol.V, p.762.

¹⁵ See *Historical Atlas of the World*. Skokie, 1997, p. 30.

¹⁶ Kirakos Ganzhakeci, *History of Armenia* (ed. by K.M. Ohandjanyan), Yerevan, 1961, p.116 (in Arm.).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.207.

¹⁸ Tumanyan Hovh., *Complete works in ten volumes*, vol.7, Yerevan, 1995, p.141 (in Arm.).

That is why some literators regard Nizami as one of the seven greatest poets of Persia, along with Ferdowsi»¹⁹.

In the notes of the Moscow publication of Nizami's works errors of historical character are to be found. For example: «Ardashir-abakhan - founder of the Sassanid dynasty in Iran (324-241)»²⁰. Ardashir I ruled in 224-241.

As is known, the kings of Caucasian Albania were Armenians and on their coins bear Armenian legends. But in the notes Armenian also is incorporated into Caucasian Albania: «Arran (Aran) - name of the ancient region in the western part of modern Azerbaidjan. The capital city of Arran was Barda, then Gyandja. In the medieval geography Arran and Armenia are seldom regarded as one and the same country»²¹.

In the notes of the five-volumed publication are referred mythological personages and ritual items of Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrians, heroes of the Old and New Testament of the Bible, Greek mythological and historical persons, idioms connected with Koran, the sacred book of Islam, but nowhere we encounter an Azerbaidjani mythology, since Nizami could not borrow from Azerbaidjani life - he was the bearer and spokesman of other milieu.

Nizami was one of the erudite people of his time, he knows that the Turkish tribes had made their acquaintance on the territory where he lives only in the XI century, arriving from northern China. In order to hide this fact in the notes it is written: «In the poetry of Nizami China, the country of the Turks, does not correspond to modern geographical ideas about China»²².

In the notes several geographic place-names are connected with Armenia. About the mountain Ankarak, mentioned in «Khosrow and Shirin», is written: «Ankarak is the mountain Ansharak on the territory of modern Armenia»²³.

Indeed, R. Aliyev, author of the notes knows that *lavash* is an Armenian bread, but he did not find it appropriate to write about it. In the notes to «Layla and Majnun» we read: «Lavash - a thin plain bread»²⁴.

The abovementioned proves one reality; although literary studies does not belong to exact sciences, anyway it could be regarded as a science if the facts are not falsified and conclusions are exclusively based on proved information. And the abovementioned facts prove that Nizami was a Persian poet, and ascription of the genius of one people to another is unacceptable.

**Translated from Russian
by A.V. Kosyan**

¹⁹ Isahakyan Av., Works in six volumes, vol.5, Yerevan, 1977, p.253 (in Arm.).

²⁰ Nizami Gyandjevi, Collection of works, vol.II, p.460.

²¹ Nizami Gyandjevi, Collection of works, vol.V, p.760.

²² Nizami Gyandjevi, Collection of works, vol.II, p. 467.

²³ Ibid., p. 460.

²⁴ Nizami Gyandjevi, Collection of works, vol.III, p. 355.