The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi

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The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi:
Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric

Edited by Kamran Talattof and Jerome W. Clinton

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In Memory of K. Allin Luther

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Preface

The work of Nizami Ganjavi, one of the great Persian poets, has achieved enduring significance. A year does not go by without the publication of new books and articles about his poetry, and although he belongs to the classical period of Persian poetry, the interpretation of his work has fueled a cultural debate in Iran in recent years. A reexamination of Nizami's work will not only shed light on the complex aspects of his poetry, but will also contribute to the ongoing cultural debate and the question of interpretation.

For the editors and some contributors, however, Nizami has additional personal significance. Our esteemed professor, K. Allin Luther, taught the poetry of Nizami for more than a decade at the University of Michigan, finding in it a source of strength and fortitude as he struggled with terminal illness. He died in 1997. To commemorate the life and work of K. Allin Luther, we organized a symposium on the poetry of Nizami Ganjavi on February 21-22, 1998, at Princeton University. This volume includes the majority of papers presented at that symposium, as well as two added later.

A well-known scholar of Iranian history and Persian studies, Luther received a B.A. from the University of Florida in 1955, a master's degree from Princeton University in 1959, and a Ph. D. from Princeton University in 1964. He studied at Hamburg University with Professor Berthold Spuler and, as part of his graduate studies, conducted research in Iran and Turkey. He taught at Portland State University and then joined the faculty at the University of Michigan, where he taught until 1995. He wrote about the history of the Saljuqs, Ilkhanids, and Atabaks of Azerbaijan.

Serious academicians often develop great respect over time for the subjects of their studies. They become closely associated with their topics and their lives become enmeshed in their research. Luther was no exception. He devoted himself to Iranian history, Persian literature, and his students in Iranian studies. He went beyond his official teaching responsibilities to organize the Nizami reading group in Ann Arbor and continued to lead it long after his retirement. For those who knew Allin Luther, this volume will have particular significance. Moreover, we hope that this book encourages more study of the works of Nizami Ganjavi.

A Note on Transliteration

The contributors to this volume have employed different systems of transliteration. In an attempt to be consistent, we have generally adjusted these to conform to the transliteration system of the Library of Congress. We have not, however, employed this system with complete fidelity, so the reader will find both *Iskandar Nama* and *Iskandernameh*. We have also left unchanged the transliteration of original poetry and excerpts in order to respect the authors' choices.