

## Fahmi: An Unknown Biographer from Transoxiana and his Role in the History of Persian Literature

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### Extended Abstract

#### 1. Introduction

After Maliha Samarqandi's death (in 1112 AH), the Persian literary biography writing in Transoxiana came to a halt for about two centuries. In this period, no Persian literary biography was written in Transoxiana until 1288 AH/1871 AD, when Vazeh Bukharayi revived such a literary genre after 179 years. From the publication of *Mozakker al-Ashab* by Maliha in Samarqand in 1104 AH/1692 AD to *Tohfah al-Ahbab* by Vazeh in Bukhara, two other works were published in Transoxiana: first, *A Collection of Poets* which was a bilingual book (Persian-Turkish/Uzbek) by Fazli Namangani (written in 1237 AH/1821 AD) in Kokand, and second, *Fahmi's Biography* (written in 1286 AH/1868 or 1869 AD) in Bukhara. This second work was unfinished; however, it is not a summary of poets' life but actually it concerns poetry samples of thinkers, mystics, princes, and kings living the current geographic areas of Iran, Afghanistan, India, and Transoxiana.

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

Fahmi is a biography writer from Transoxiana, who was originally from Samarqand and lived in Bukhara for a short time. This study aimed to investigate *Fahmi's Biography* and its significance as a historical literary document in Transoxiana within a period of cultural and literary inactivity in this area. The study aimed to answer the following questions: who is Fahmi? What are the features of his biography? What are the critical views of this author? What role does this biography play in the biography writing and the Persian anthology of Transoxiana? After analyzing Fahmi's life events and critically introducing his biography, the study investigated the nine criteria suggested and categorized by the biography writer, which are: 1. the penname, 2. the racial and familial affiliations, 3. the literary and intellectual

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affiliations, 4. the birthplace, and birth and death dates, 5. the occupation, education, teachers, students, and contemporary figures, 6. the works of poets, 7. the affiliation with the court, 8. the rhetorical interest in biography writing, 9. language. The last section of the study focused on the critical views of the writer grouped in four parts: historical-analytic, moral, socio-political, and rhetorical-aesthetic. Despite the fact that this biography is an unfinished work, it gives rich data on the literary aspects of Farsi as well as the mystic and intellectual mainstreams of the time which can all contribute to writing about the Persian anthology in Transoxiana.

### 3. Method

This study employed a critical-analytic method of data analysis as well as genre-based analysis in order to introduce Fahmi and his biography. It also investigated the biography writing criteria and the author's critical views.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Molla Abdolmotaleb Khajeh, also known as Fahmi, was a biography writer from Transoxiana. There is not much left about his life, education, and teachers. We only know that he lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> AH/ 19<sup>th</sup> AD century in Bukhara, and he was alive when he authored his biography in 1286 AH/1868 or 1869 AD. It could be interpreted from the biography that he was one of the children of Ishan Pir Dahbidi. This sect was a branch of Naqshbandi in Transoxiana. He is also known to have cooperation with the court in Bukhara. His only biography is *Fahmi's Biography* which was authored when Haji Molla Mirmohammad Toghshabeh ordered it. *Fahmi's biography* is unfinished general prose which has simple language without any kind of artificiality and complexity. There are 26 samples of poetry from poets (8 persons), thinkers and mystics (14 persons), kings (3 persons), and princes (1 person) who lived in current Iran, Afghanistan, India, and Transoxiana. There is a debate on the beginning and end of its writing. Aini, for the first time, indicates the date of its writing in 1177 AH. This date is certainly wrong considering the explicit indications in *Fahmi's Biography* and it seems that it is a typing error. The correct date is 1277 AH (1860/1861 AD) which is cited in several sources. Based on the last date mentioned in the biography, it is likely that the biography was finished in 1286 AH/ 1868 or 1869 AD. Despite the author's rich scientific knowledge and his problems to have access to other references, it seems that the work was unfinished because the authorities neglected this literary and cultural figure and there was not a literary mainstream in those times.

## 5. Conclusion

*Fahmi's Biography* was mostly left unrecognized until Aini's era because of the chaotic conditions of the time, scattered and condensed writings, and the lack of much biography writing among authorities and literary communities. However, after Aini, Fahmi was gradually known among literary references and found its place in the Persian anthology of the region, though not much highlighted. *Fahmi's Biography* brought along a context for following the impact of great classic Persian poets in Transoxiana, analyzed the influence of significant mystic sects in the region, mentioned political and social information about biographies, and cited much information about poets and thinkers of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries in Transoxiana; however, this is less significant compared to other biographies in this region. Nonetheless, besides the above-mentioned aspects, its significant could be noted for its genealogy in the region.

**Keywords:** Persian Biography Writing, *Fahmi's Biography*, Khajeh Abdolmotalleb Fahmi, Transoxiana

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