

Mustakim Arıcı (ed.), *Philosophy, Medicine and History: A Study on Biographical Dictionaries in Arabic Literature [Felsefe Tıp ve Tarih Tabakat Literatürü Üzerine Bir İnceleme]*, İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2014. 346 pages. ISBN: 978-605-5245-51-1.

*Hatice Toksöz**

Studies on Islamic philosophy have recently gained a momentum in Turkey by the appearance of original studies on texts produced during the first classical period of Islamic thought from eighth to thirteenth centuries and the publication of critical edition and Turkish translation of the related texts. Besides, a study on the corpus of biographical dictionaries of this period, which contain comprehensive information on the lives, works and ideas of scholars from pre-Islamic and Islamic period, has been considerably needed due to absence of a such interest. Addressing to this need, Bilim ve Sanat Vakfı Medeniyet Araştırmaları Merkezi [The Foundation for Sciences and Arts, The Center for Civilizational Studies] organized a series of workshops under the title “Felsefi Açıdan Tabakât Literatürü” [The Literature of Biographical Dictionaries from Philosophical Perspective] between April 2012 and February 2013. Afterwards, the papers presented in these sessions were turned into articles by the presenters and published in this volume.

The principal characteristics of this volume titled *Felsefe, Tıp ve Tarih: Tabakât Literatürü Üzerine Bir İnceleme* (Philosophy, Medicine and History: A Study on Biographical Dictionaries in Arabic Literature) composed of eleven articles is its rich content on the classical historiography of Islamic philosophy and it's main sources. This volume is a study on biographical dictionaries produced during the first classical period of Islamic thought. Therefore, each article is devoted to a particular kind of biographical dictionaries and renders essential information on the dictionaries' contents. In addition, the fact that each article also provides information on the life, and other existing works, of the author of the biographical dictionary together with his scholarly networks as well as discusses the text's belonging to the author, its publications, translations and studies increases the importance of the volume. The scholarly value of the volume can also be seen from the discussions on the reasons and motivations of the authors to write

* Assist. Prof. Süleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences.

these biographical dictionaries in each article. Most of the works examined in the volume can be considered as an independent genre of “biographical dictionaries” whereas some of them can be used as a source for the history of sciences, contributions of nations to sciences, history of religions and sects. The works that become subject of this volume are principal sources used for both the history of Islamic philosophy and sciences, and especially the history of Islamic medicine. This volume, which provides rich bibliographical information, organizes the biographical dictionaries according to the time in which their authors lived. The editor Mustakim Arıcı’s “Preface” provides a road map for the reader by listing the principles and policies considered during the preparation of the articles.

The first book on the historiography of philosophy and medicine is Ishaq b. Hı̇nayn’s *Ta’rikh al-aṭibbā* and the second one is Ibn Juljul’s *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā wa al-ḥukamā*. M. Cüneyt Kaya introduced these two books in the first two articles of the volume. Kaya states that *Ta’rikh al-aṭibbā* treats the history of the origins and development of medicine along with philosophy and the history of prophets and *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā wa al-ḥukamā* includes wide data on famous wise men and physicians in the east and the west since the time of prophet Adam. Kaya’s table for the names mentioned in these two books and his translation of *Ta’rikh al-aṭibbā* into Turkish provide the reader with detailed information and help to understand the texts.

The third article is devoted to Ibn al-Nadīm’s *al-Fihrist*, written in 4/10th century Baghdad in 377/987 at a time when various scientific branches appeared and each branch established and developed its own methodology as a result of dense translation movements. *Al-Fihrist*, introduced by İbrahim Halil Üçer, is a book surveying philosophical and scientific tradition produced in the first four centuries of Islam with a historical perspective. Üçer states that Ibn al-Nadīm organizes his book to comprise all sciences rather than limiting to one scientific branch and writes ten chapters, each of which is devoted to one scientific branch. In this context, in connection with the limits of the volume, Üçer focuses on *al-Fihrist*’s seventh chapter where philosophy and medical sciences are treated, and examines the origins of philosophy and its venture in various cultures and then discusses the introduction of philosophy to the Islamic world and the information on physicians and philosophers mentioned here. Following Ibn al-Nadīm’s *al-Fihrist*, M. Fatih Arslan introduces Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī’s *al-Muqābasāt*, which is a compilation of scientific debates on various subjects by multiple scholars. Based on the variety of subjects and the number of individuals referred in the book, Arslan states that it is an important source reflecting both the author’s philosophical and scientific personality and the custom of scientific circles in contemporary Baghdad with its information on the scientific debates.

Considering the scholarly life in the Muslim world, especially in fifth/elev-enth-century Andalusia of the western Muslim world, Qāḍī Sa'īd al-Andalusī's *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* stands as an important source for Islamic science and philosophy. Emrullah Bulut states that unlike others the book has four sections and chapters and organizes the human societies according to their races, language, religion, culture and contributions to scientific development. Bulut emphasizes that Qāḍī Sa'īd categorizes ancient nations according to their language, geography, and their governmental structures. Therefore, the nature that keeps *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* different from other similar texts is its classification of ancient nations with great states and civilizations according their contribution to philosophy and science as well as to common language and geography and also its emphasis on the universality and accumulative nature of rational/philosophical/theoretical sciences in the Islamic world.

Al-Sharistānī's *al-Milal wa al-nihāl* whose objective is to define what is a *madh-hab* surveys a history of Islamic sects by focusing on the founders of sects. It should be considered as a biographical dictionary for its allocation of considerable space to the concept of philosophy and philosophers. In this framework, the book introduced by Ahmet Çapku is undoubtedly a classical text for the history of religions, sects and philosophical schools. Çapku states that *al-Milal wa al-nihāl*, unlike other contemporary similar books, analyzes objectively and descriptively all beliefs and thoughts since the time of Prophet Adam in a systematically organized way with certain principles. He also emphasizes that thanks to this aspect, it has become an indispensable source for Islamic thought.

Kübra Bilgin introduces Bayhaqī's *Tatimma Şiwān al-ḥikma*, which is a source for the history of Islamic philosophy composed according to the methodology used by Sulaymān al-Sijistānī's *Şiwān al-ḥikma*. The book especially points out Ibn Sīnā and his circle and his students' involvement in the philosopher's works. The book has become valuable for its contribution to understanding the venture of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy after him. In addition, Bayhaqī's information on the circulation of the works of individuals he mentions increases the value of the book. From the presentation of Bilgin, we understand that *Tatimma* provides the means to survey the venture of Islamic intellectual tradition by informing the reader about the lives, works and student networks of the philosophers. Even we can say that thanks to this aspect, the book maps the history of Islamic philosophy. Similarly, Kübra Şenel introduces Ibn al-Qiftī's *Ikhbār al-'ulamā' bi-akhbār al-ḥuḳamā'*, which surveys those who wrote on philosophy and its sub-disciplines logic, mathematic, physical and metaphysical sciences starting from Harmas, who is associated with Prophet Idris, and continuing with many Greek, Syria, Roman, Babylonian, Egyptian, Indian, Per-

sian, Arab, Andalusian and Sicilian scholars. With this aspect, it provides a perfect map for the history of philosophy.

Another book introduced by Hümeýra Özturan is Ibn Khalliqān's *Wafayāt al-a'yān*. Özturan states that the book is especially important for its inclusion of Muslim philosophers in the historiography of Islamic philosophy as well as statesmen, jurists and poets. For Özturan, the distinguishing mark of the book is the anecdotes on the lives of individuals rather than their scholarly personalities and works. Besides, Özturan asserts that even though the book is considered as a source for the history of Islamic philosophy for its inclusion of the biographies of Muslim philosophers, it is not penned as a source for the history of Islamic philosophy and it should not be considered as a separate history of philosophy because it does not adopt a philosophy-centric approach.

A classical book introduced by Mustakim Arıcı is Ibn Abi Uşaybi'a's '*Uyün al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*' which has an eminent position in the history of Islamic philosophy. Arıcı states that Ibn Abū Usaybi'a intends to write a comprehensive survey on all authoritative figures in the discipline of medicine since the beginning of the history of humanity until his time, but due to the fact that many scientists were philosopher at the same time he lists all philosophers with their biographies and works. The book comprising of fifteen sections organized according to geographic regions stands as an indispensable source for the historiography of philosophy and thought in general and the historiography of Islamic philosophy in particular because of its presentation of the biographies of physicians and philosophers in the world history. It seems quite right to add "Hippocratic oath" in the attachment to the article in Greek, Latin, Arabic and Turkish versions as it is given in Arabic in '*Uyün al-anbā'*' and is highly important for the history of medicine.

Lastly, Eşref Altaş introduces Shams al-dīn al-Shahrazūri's *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ*. The most important aspect of *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ*, written in the thirteenth century at a time when a rich literature on Islamic thought was produced, is the description of philosophers with certain adjectives showing the illuminationist perspective. Altaş states that the book is focused on wisdom, manner and advices of the philosophers, and for this aspect it is considered as a biographical dictionary as its organization and titles also indicate. However, he also states that the content of the book suggests that it actually belongs to *ḥikamiyāt* literature.

The book titled *Felsefe, Tıp ve Tarih: Tabakāt Literatürü Üzerine Bir İnceleme* (Philosophy, Medicine and History: A Study on Biographical Dictionaries in Arabic Literature) including articles on various texts that belong to the genre of biographical dictionaries seems to be a highly important reference book for the studies of Islamic philosophy as each article reflects the respective author's life, scholarship, works,

networks as well as the scholarly activities and discussions of the time. The book, on the one hand, presents detailed information related to the content of the analyzed biographical dictionary in each chapter, and on the other hand it provides a rich map of the history of philosophy and the history of Islamic philosophy with “Appendices” at the end of some articles chronologically listing the individuals mentioned in the analyzed biographical dictionary. However the book examines the biographical dictionaries produced in the first classical period of Islamic thought and focuses only relevant sections on philosophy and medicine and omits sections related to other subjects. The disregarding the whole texts of the analyzed books seems to be one deficiency of the book. Therefore, the remaining parts of the biographical dictionaries produced in the first classical period and the books of the same genre produced after the thirteenth century still await further studies. Although Turkish translation of the relevant sections on philosophy and medicine of the analyzed texts are given in the appendices of some articles, the critical editions of the mentioned books and their translations seems to be essentially important for the historiography of Islamic philosophy in Turkey. In conclusion, *Felsefe, Tıp ve Tarih: Tabakât Literatürü Üzerine Bir İnceleme* (Philosophy, Medicine and History: A Study on Biographical Dictionaries in Arabic Literature), which has accelerated the studies on the history of philosophy in general and the history of Islamic philosophy in particular stands as an important work promising for filling the gaps mentioned above.