

Britain and abroad? Examining consumption would enrich the story. In addition, raw silk production in Bengal is well discussed, reflecting the Company's interest. Yet silk weaving in India receives little attention in this book. This imbalance makes a reader wonder whether silk weaving in Bengal also declined in the first half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, I would like the concluding chapter to be even bolder. The chapter could have included directions for future investigation and implications for research into the related fields of research.

Nonetheless, *The English East India Company's Silk Enterprise* is undoubtedly a welcome addition to our knowledge of early-modern global history. Furthermore, the cover image is breathtakingly beautiful!

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ISLAMIC INSCRIPTIONS OF FERGHANA AND SEMIRECHYE: ARABIC-WRITTEN MONUMENTS OF THE 11<sup>TH</sup> – 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES FROM KYRGYZSTAN. By VLADIMIR N. NASTICH. pp. 434. Saint Petersburg, Russia. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies, The Herzen State Pedagogical University, 2019. doi:[10.1017/S1356186320000309](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186320000309)

Within mountain ranges cut through by major rivers, the Ferghana and Semirechye valleys of Kyrgyzstan have witnessed many cultural and political changes. From the eleventh century through to the seventeenth, the region was tossed to and fro amongst the great empires of the Qarākhānids, Mongols, Timurids, Shaybanids and others. Remarkably, it retains some permanent vestiges of this past; but, they have not been adequately explored. Vladimir Nastich has undertaken this task however in the volume under review. He has recorded and organised epigraphic material from architectural sites, tombstones and even single rocks, an effort that has taken him almost half a century. It has been intricate and revealing work. The inscriptions have special interest because even though the areas are on the border of several large ethnic and language groups, most inscriptions are in Arabic. The dominant occurrence of that language may surprise one since Arabs never reached these valleys; but the religion of Islam did, which brought the language and script. Therefore, buildings or tombstones extolling local rulers or religious scholars are prominent in the region. Nastich notes that epigraphic monuments have a number of advantages over manuscripts since they have not been edited and many have precise dates as well as locations. Conversely, the information is limited and there is no recognised common system so far developed, to analyze writing styles and word use in various areas and chronological periods. At the end, he proposes several approaches to constructing such methods. As a result, he hopes this volume will lead to an expanded use of monumental epigraphy from medieval Kyrgyzstan and other parts of Central Asia.

After reviewing works on Arabic epigraphy and excavations and research on medieval monuments in Kyrgyzstan undertaken in the last two hundred years, the author presents in Chapter 2 exciting material for dating four architectural masterpieces. The first of these is the tomb attributed to Shaykh Fazl with legends that have eluded confident reading. The mausoleum is located in the middle of the country towards the west near Gulistan. He decodes inscriptions on the friezes of the interior and the medallions in the upper corners of the building with transcription into modern Arabic letters. Clear photographs are included

allowing the reader the opportunity to decode too. Nastich considers that it was most likely built between 1055 and 1062 by the Qarākhānid rulers Muḥammad Nasr and his son, ‘Abbas. Interestingly, the phrases and style of epigraphy were quite consciously copied onto an eighteenth century mausoleum in nearby Uzbekistan, presumably to make it look older. Then working on the portal of the southern mausoleum in Uzgend, however, Nastich cannot provide any firm date except that comparison with other material indicates that it is also from the Qarākhānid period. Next, he considers the portal of the northern mausoleum in Uzgend, which has a rich citation about its inhabitant with the date in Persian. Going into Semirechye in the Talas River valley in the north of the country, the author identifies the so-called Manass Gumbaz, the mausoleum locally ascribed to the mythical hero, as actually built for a Mongol Chaghadaid princess who died in 1334. Again, the inscriptions of these buildings have photographs that Nastich then transcribes into modern Arabic script for the reader to access a wealth of information not available before.

Lesser objects are the subject of Chapter 3, that is, the *qayraqs* or tombstones. The epitaphs on these personal memorials are mostly in Arabic, rarely in Farsi or Turkic. Three major sites provide substantial historical material and are, in Ferghana, Safed Bulan (modern Gulistan), Uzgend, and in Semirechye, Burana (near modern Tokmok, southeast of Bishkek). Here too, Nastich often provides photographs and also transcriptions, then a reading, interpretation and comments. He compares them to the important registers of tombstones from Osh, Nookat (south of Osh), and other places. Altogether 180 texts offer reliable and systematic categories. These *qayraqs* provide hitherto unknown data on local events. They reveal, for example, families of spiritual leaders, such as the Bukanids, offshoots of the rulers of Bukhara before the Mongol invasion, and several generations of descendants of the ‘Mufti of Kisrigan’ from Yangi Nawkar, all generally of the Hanafi school of law. These monuments thus give much biographical information that include written works. Curiously, certain phrases are used on tombstones over and over that help to trace the influence of certain shaykhs and their writings. In a later chart, the author gives a chronology to this material, thus indicating the importance of the region during different times. The earliest were prepared in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. More survive from the late Qarākhānid era and the brief control of the Khwarazmshāh, Muḥammad, in the early thirteenth century. During the Mongol epoch from the second to the sixth decades of the thirteenth century, gravestones are exceedingly rare. However, with Chaghadaid rule starting under Baraq Khān in the late thirteenth century to the early fourteenth, tombstones reappear, reflecting the revival of social, cultural and economic activity.

The author manages in Chapter 4 to codify the information gained in the previous chapters. He presents rigorous essays and charts on family genealogies, groups of *qauraqs*, personal names (*kunyas*), honorific or professional labels (*laqabs*), dates, epigraphic styles and even a list of monuments for women. This chapter therefore suggests a system for analyzing inscriptions that could be applied to other Central Asian medieval monuments.

In the next part, Chapter 5, Nastich deals with lengthy legends on large rocks often found in the mountains. Although they are infrequent, they offer some ordinary and informal information about the area since they are not as official as architectural phrases and obituaries. In this way, they provide insight into less obvious ethnic and social forces, particularly Sufi activity, and linguistic variations. There are property and judicial statements as well as even technical texts, ranging from the eleventh century to the early eighteenth. As with other material in this volume, Nastich has transcribed the inscriptions into modern Arabic print. The photographs of rock legends are particularly difficult to work with because of the dark and weather-battered surfaces, so the author’s care in transcribing these messages is especially beneficial.

In each section, Nastich discusses the physical state of the inscription, gives the possible reading, compares it with other texts, coins and earlier research and then presents a conclusion about the objects’ epigraphic contribution to the historical movements of the valleys in the mid and late medieval period. A map at the beginning identifies the sites of these monuments, a practical aid since the country currently has convoluted borders. However, there are no political boundaries depicting various

empires. In fact, this volume shows how diverse the region was, which sometimes probably operated under local rule. The book goes beyond being a catalogue of monuments; it is also a model for assessing and interpreting under-utilised sources for the little-known history of Kyrgyzstan.

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