



Hüseyin Dāniş

(b. Istanbul 1286/1870, d. Ankara 1322/1943), a leading Turco-Persian poet, journalist, and scholar.

An Introduction, transliteration and translations of “Omar Khayyam and Shakespeare,” and “Khayyam’s Rubaiyat”

Introduction, transliteration and translations by Efe Murad Balıkçıoğlu

Ḥüseyn Dāniş (b. Istanbul 1286/1870, d. Ankara 1322/1943), a leading Turco-Persian poet, journalist, and scholar.

Dāniş, the son of Moḥammad-Hāšem Eşfahānī, a Persian merchant who had settled in Turkey in about 1850, learned Persian at home while attending a Turkish elementary school; he then attended a French school for two years, followed by several years in a Persian school, the Dabestān-e Īrānīān, founded in 1301/1884. His languages included Turkish, French, English, and Arabic. Dāneş subsequently taught at his Persian school, where he was associated with Mīrzā Mahdī Tabrīzī, editor of the Persian newspaper *Akhtar*; Āqhā Khān Kermānī, a writer and poet; and the writer, poet, and scholar Mīrzā Ḥabīb Eşfahānī (qq.v.). His first book was a geography, *Joḡrāfiā-ye Īrān*, published in 1312/1894. In the same year he began to write for the Turkish newspaper *Eqdām* and to contribute poetry to the Turkish weekly *Tarwat fonūn*. In 1313/1895 he was appointed tutor to the Ottoman princes Loṭf-Allāh and Şabāḥ-al-Dīn, a post he held for six years. During that period, he published *Navāy-e şarīr*, a translation of selected works by Alphonse de Lamartine into Turkish. He traveled extensively with the princes in Europe and Egypt. In 1319/1901, after leaving their service, he became a government translator, taught Persian in the Maktab-e solṭānī, and was professor of Persian literature at the Dār al-fonūn (polytechnic college) in Istanbul. In 1328/1910 he declined an offer to become deputy from Tabrīz to the Persian Majles.

Dāniş wrote on literary, political, and social issues for many Persian newspapers. His editorials in *Shams* included sharp criticism of Persian institutions, society, and customs but were always constructive and educational in tone. He also wrote literary articles in *Khāvar* and particularly *Sorūsh*, edited by ‘Alī-Akbar DehkHodā (q.v.). In addition, he contributed to *Ḥabl al-matīn* in Bombay. His correspondence with E. G. Browne, who called him “a notable man of letters both in Persian and Turkish” (*Lit. Hist. Persia* IV, p. viii), extended over twenty-five years and reveals him as an outstanding personality in the Turco-Persian reform movement and in Turco-Persian belles lettres and scholarship.

Dāniş’s other published works include *Sarāmadān-e sokhan* (1327/1909); *Ta’līm-e lesān-e fārsī*, a Persian-language textbook in four volumes, commissioned by the Ottoman office of education (1331/1913); *Hadīya-ye sāl* (1330/1912); *Ḳarābahā-ye madāyen*, his finest literary accomplishment (1330/1912); *Zardosht-nāma* (1918); a Turkish translation of ‘Omar Khayyām’s poetry (1340/1922), which must rank as his most important literary contribution; *Fransızca-türkçe hukuki ve medini lûgat. Dictionnaire juridique et civique français-turc* (1934); and a *dīvān* of poetry in Turkish.

After the founding of Tehran University in 1313/1934 Daniş accepted the chair of Persian and Turkish literature, but, before he could take up the post, Reżā Shāh (1304-20/1925-41) visited Turkey and urged him to serve in the Persian embassy in Ankara. He was still working as press attaché when he died, without ever having visited Persia. He is buried in Üsküdar across the Bosphorus from Istanbul.

Source: The entry “Dāneş, Ḥosayn” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

Rubā'iyāt-ı Hıyyām

A'mākına gömmüşdü derin bir yem-i zehhār

Bĩnlerce la'lā'i duruħşende vü dilber;

Ka'rından o bahrın o la'lā'i-i güzĩni

Naql itdi söküb sāhile Hıyyām-ı şināver.

Eylül 1921

Khayyām's Rubaiyat

Buried in deep is an abundant forage

A thousand pearls resplendent and heart-ravishing;

At the bottom of that sea, Khayyām the Diver

Plucked those select pearls pulling them ashore.

September 1921

‘Ömer Hıyyām ve Şeykspir

— kuru insān kellesine —

Mādām ki bir gūn gelecek ey ser-i derrāk,

Boşluđlarına hep ıolacak hāk ile hāşāk,

İç durma hemān, fırsatı fevt itme ki ıolsun

Toprak ıolacak yerlere şahbā-ı ıarabnāk.

18 Teşrīn-i evvel 1924

Omar Khayyam and Shakespeare

— to the human skull —

Since now a day will come, O the Intelligent Head,

Your cavity will be filled with soil and trash,

Drink now, do not behold, don’t let the moment pass

So that mirthful wine should congest sites—not earth.

October 18, 1924

The quatrains “Rubā’iyyāt-ı Hıyyām” and “‘Ömer Hıyyām ve Şeykspir” by Hıseyin Dāniş from his only collection of poetry *Kārvān-ı ‘Ömr* (Istanbul: Yeni Matba’a, 1926), pp. 108 and 133. Both translations appeared first in Efe Murat Balıkçıođlu, “Quatrains of Many Receptions: A Survey of ‘Omar Khayyam’s Perceptions in Ottoman and Turkish Translations”, *Journal of Iranian Studies* 57.2 (2024): 1-29.