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The Place of Persian Literature Study in English Scholar Edward Browne's Products

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ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, among the British scholars, Edward Browne has acquired a special place. He showed great interest in classical Persian poetry. He started his studies at Cambridge University. Most of his articles are about Iran. In 1902-1924's, he published the four-volume book "A Literary History of Persia." In this book, he has highly appreciated the works by the classical Persian poets. Browne is a great orientalist who has made the western world familiar with the Persian literature.

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INTRODUCTION

The venerable English orientalist Edward Browne (1862-1926) is one of the scholars who have had major share in literal and cultural study of Iran in the west. He was highly interested in classical Persian poetry; accordingly, he learnt eastern languages Persian and Arabic respectively. He was a research scholar at Pembroke College of Cambridge University since 1887. (Hüseynov, 1987) In order to develop his knowledge in eastern languages, he was sent on a mission to Iran for a year, and having returned to Cambridge, he published his lofty famous journey book "A Year among the Persians."

It should be noted that E. Browne, the outstanding orientalist, has actually attained his fame as a result of writing articles and books on Persian literature. The fourth volume of his book "A Research on Iranian Literature" has found a very elevated place. The eminent British author and orientalist, E. Browne, published a lot of articles and books in academic fields. Basically, he made researches in the fields of history and literature. His works are of great worth because of their academic value, rareness, and style. The academic value of his works, both in his lifetime and after his death has been confessed. Most of his essays are about the Persians. His fame is mostly due to his authentic historical narrative about the Babi movement. He published his two translated works on Babists and described the early history of Babism and Baha'ism according to the meetings held at that time by some western people.

In the issues related to academic fields, he owns a number of published works having been studied by other scholars until now. Using his language and style found a worthy place. People were even inclined to him for his positive view. In some parts of his famous book "A Year among the Persians," the western people's noticing the attractive character of the Persian people is described and even some clear accounts on the influence of opium are given. The first publication of the book in 1926 attracted a lot of attention, and the republished edition of the journey book, after his death, was included among the lofty works of English literature. (Hüseynov, 1987)

In the field of Iranology, with his tireless researches and constant efforts, he managed to publish the first volume of "A Literary History of Persia." in 1902. The next volumes of the book were published one by one in 1906, 1920, and 1924. It is honest to claim that, today, this work as has gained much importance as a permanent source. It may be said that while as a result of the political atmosphere of the age, the whole Iranian nation was so doubtful in its foreign relations especially with the British and Russian nations, E. Browne and his works were highly esteemed by wise Iranian people. It was a fair action to grant him the Iranian lion-sun sign because of his services in the field of Iranology.¹ He is quite well-known in Iran even today. One of the streets in Tehran is called after his name, and, even after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, his statue was kept. (Bertelgs, 1987)

We should keep in mind the fact that Browne was not a Baha'ist but an orientalist. His interest in Babi movement was provoked by Joseph Arthur De Gobineau's book. While searching for materials on Sufi movement in Cambridge library, he was confronted with the book. It is necessary to remark that E. Browne translated Abdu'l-Baha's "A Traveller's Narrative" and added several terms and appendixes to it. The English researcher, Edward Browne, acknowledges the particular situations in which the Persian authors have composed

their novels. The first novel in Persian language is the famous romance "The Trap-Setters or the Avengers of Mazdak" by San'ati Zadeh Kermani. He started to compose its first volume at the age of 14. Yet many years later, he accomplished writing the two volumes of the book, the first one in Mumbai in 1920-1921 and the second one in Tehran in 1925-1926. In the introduction of the first volume, the publisher introduced the book as a valuable Persian novel of the time, but E. E. Bertles claimed this work not to be of high value. However, in the press, the two volumes of the book had been introduced as two original works.²

It should be mentioned that having written the first volume, the author was not of the opinion of completing the novel. Yet when he found out about E. Browne's positive view on the work, he decided to write the second volume. Chronologically, the second Persian romance is Mirza Mohammad Baqer Khosravani's "Shams and Tuqra." This product was composed in Kermanshah in the years 1907-1909. Agha Shaikh Musa Nasri's "Esq o Saltanat" is the third Persian novel completed in 1916. It was published for the first time in Hamedan in 1919 and for the second time in Mumbai in 1924-1925. Edward Browne spoke some words about this book. Yet except some minor details, the British Iranologist didn't pay much attention to it. (Mojan Momen, 2001)

A part of an unpublished work by E. Browne is found among the papers in Cambridge University library. The part which is an abridged version of "Information about Iran" is evidently one of the most important Babi works; it is clear from its opening section that one of Browne's main concerns in 1888 has been to write it. It is observed that, at this time, starting to write this work has been of high priority. That is why Browne, in 1889, writes that the abridged work has been completed. At this stage, his main goal has been supplying materials for his own book "Iranian Babism." Hence, this book has also been published in this period. Browne, later, delayed the work until 1903. (Bertelgs, 1987) At this time, he was asked to write an introduction to Myron Phelps's book "Abbas Effendi." He had announced his agreement to do these 15 years before; he had promised to publish the work. For this reason, having written the introductory part, he started to do the rest of the job. First, he made some editions and then some corrections, yet he did not complete them. As a result, editions and corrections were stopped at the eighty first page. It is not clear what made Browne stop accomplishing the task. (Browne, 2001)

It may be thought that Browne has studied the translation by Nicholas in translating the whole "Bayan" into French. It is also possible that he has deviated his attention from the current issues to composing his monumental work "A Literary History of Persia." Or, maybe, he has come to the result that the work has not been worthy enough to be published.

In this way, Browne published "Kitab Nuktatul Kaf" (the representative of the alphabet for fundamental concepts, vocabulary and names in "Persian Bayan") after he had edited it himself. Moreover, he proposed the preparation and publication of the new "Summary of the Persian Bayan." Leaving the manuscript unfinished had been recommended to the library of Cambridge University. Thus it was left there among Browne's papers. At the time of its production, the researcher M. Mojan said that including it in kulliyat was not his first attempt. It had two reasons: first, it was not complete in its expressions, and, secondly, it had less benefitted from Brown's research activities. It was, hence, expected to find some negligence in it. However, the matter of the survival of its researches was an exception. (Mojan Momen, 1987)

A little later, Mojan pointed out, in his attempt to solve the problem, he found writing the second half of the manuscript with minimal editing of the original work as the first step. To do this, he followed Browne's own techniques in writing the first half. In translating, as well, he used the previous method of translation. It was the same method applied in "The Babis of Persia." Later, Browne, in translating his next works, applied the method used for editing the first half of the manuscript. M. Mojan wrote he had minimized text corrections and also had used less editing in the second half as compared with Browne's own editing in the first part. As a result, reading the first part may not be as easy as the first one. Yet he expressed hopes to have been quite loyal to Browne's own intention. He said he had attempted to decrease incoherence, carelessness and intangibility to the least possible. Paying careful attention to quotations which had not been an easy task was considered by Mojan as the second step to this problem.

Therefore, "Persian Bayan," among Babi products, is a plain one lacking many complications. Some of the parts, however, were written with complexity, and Mojan was not satisfied with Browne's explanations in this respect. Some of these complicated parts were adopted materials. Mojan delegated working on the other parts to the future researchers. Note that the book "Persian Bayan" has been written in a way to include a summary in Arabic language for each chapter. (Bertelgs, 1987)

In September 29, 1903, Browne wrote he had made a complete summary of "Persian Bayan" nearly 15 years before. The summary was one of the most important and organized works in illuminating Bab's general doctrines. Browne wished to be able to edit it in a few days and possibly translate it completely. Since then, he even compared some manuscripts (five or six ones) with his own. Yet concentrating on other materials, for years, the task was delayed, and it may be said, was forgotten.

E. Browne, in the quite pale atmosphere of the 17th century, found Saib Tabrizi as "the most brilliant poet" among the poets of this age and "the lone one being worth discussing in matters of locality." One million three hundred thousand couplets of Persian verse during a few decades was a phenomenon making its composer, Abu

Abdullah Muhammad Rudaki, one of the most famous poets not only in Iran but also in the western world of the following ages. The poems by Rudaki, being considered as the father of Persian poetry, attracted Browne's attention. Poets and researches of different ages have called Rudaki "the sultan of Persian poetry" and have looked at his poems with extreme respect. (Hüseynov, 1999) Rudaki and his creativity have been introduced both in Encyclopedia and in literal, historical, and mystical sources.

Rudaki's popularity is not limited to Iran. He is known in other territories and among different nations. He is famous among the thinkers and scholars too; in a way that that, some of them dedicated the whole or a part of their works to him. British scholars' role, in this respect, was not a minor one. In "A Literary History of Persia," Edward Browne thinks of Rudaki as equal to Shakespeare in eloquence and rhetoric. While in some other part of the book, he introduces Rudaki as a musician comparable to Barbod living in the reign of Samanids. Anywhere, he calls Rudaki "the father of Persian poetry." (Rudaki, 1997)

E. Browne speaks about the illegal publication of a limited number of a satiric newspaper entitled as "Shabnameh" in Tabriz. In his book published in London in 1914, he writes about the irregularity of the publication of "Shabnameh" in Tabriz in 1892 and using Ali Gholi's signature at appropriate times by its editor and author of most of its articles, Ali Gholi Khan Safarov. Browne also speaks of decorating a great number of its pages with caricatures, a job quite valuable in his view. The most important issues of the newspaper, which have ever existed even in the present age, Browne reminds, are the 1906 issues, being introduced by the readers as a sample for satirical writing. (Məmmədli)

Reminding an article in one of the issues of "Shabnameh," E. Browne discusses about the bread famine and the closed shops of the market, the chaos and turbulence of the time: "Yesterday morning, I sent the servant to the market to buy bread for the morning meal. He went out early in the morning and came back after 3 hours. He returned with his clothes torn, his face scarred, his body injured in different parts, and the whole body black and blue." (Məmmədli) Another article narrates the story of getting rid of the bad smelling mud of the street and, in that unpleasant situation, approaching the king's palace right at the corner of the very street. E. Browne presents the written materials in Turkish and modern Azeri language of this issue on a page whose half has been decorated with painting. However, he gives information neither about the date and place of publication nor about its editor and author. In his book "A Literary History of Persia" (1906), Browne dedicates a part, among the works in Persian language, to the eminent thinker and poet of Azerbaijan, Nizami Ganjavi. Regarding the popularity of his poems among the Persian speakers, it seems necessary to mention some notes by Browne; in order to analyze Nizami's poems, he has translated certain parts of five of his poems into English. (Krİmskiy)

It is interesting that there exist three complete translations of "Haft Peikar" in Western Europe. The poem was first translated by C. E. Wilson and was published in London in 1924. The translation was published in two volumes with a similar method, and with a few exceptions, it reflected the original work. The first volume contains the translated content, and the detailed text is included in the second one. The translation has been republished several times. (Nizami Ganjavi, 1996) The poem was also translated into English by J. S. Meisami, and, in 1967, it was published in Great Britain; it was republished in 1995 too. The Iranian scholar Ahmad Kasravi Tabrizi (1890-1946) in the weekly "Nobahar," and later in several articles, introduced himself as a hardworking and tireless researcher. Accordingly, he declared that the translation of Ibn Esfandiar's "The History of Tabarestan" by E. Browne, published in London, to contain big gaps from his point of view. In addition, he reminded that some clear distortions had occurred in the translation made by Browne at that time. He claimed that Browne had not recognized the individual words and expressions adequately. (Məğalat-e Kəsrəvi, 1998)

The researches made by the prominent English orientalist E. Browne reveals more clearly the fact that, since the early 20th century, there has emerged in English literature study a deep interest to study the works created in Persian language by the classical poets.

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