



A History of Ottoman Poetry Volume II: 1450-1520 (Gibb Memorial Trust Turkish Studies)

E.J.W. Gibb

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The History of Ottoman Poetry, first published in six volumes between 1900 and 1909, was the principal product of E.J.W. Gibb's devotion to Ottoman Turkish literature. By the time of his early death in 1901 only the first volume had appeared in print. The remainder was almost complete and was seen through the press by Gibb's friend and literary executor, the Persian scholar E. G. Browne. The History was designed to provide the first extended account in English of Ottoman literature. The first four volumes cover four developmental phases, largely under the influence of Persian literature, from around 1300 to the middle of the nineteenth century. The fifth volume introduces the 'New School' of Ottoman poetry produced in Gibb's own era and inspired by French models. The sixth volume contains in Ottoman printed script the texts of all works quoted in English translation in the previous volumes. No comparable study has appeared in English since Gibb's magnum opus. His History of Ottoman Poetry has become a classic work which is still widely referred to and valuable for students, scholars and anyone with a general interest in Middle Eastern literature and culture.

Volume II (originally published 1902) covers the period 1450 to 1520, the early 'classical age'. For Gibb, the reign of Mehmed II (1451-81) was 'the true starting point of Ottoman poetry', when more verse was written in the increasingly Persianized literary idiom of the Ottoman court, in contrast to the relatively provincial Turkish style of most poets of the first period. Among the leading poets of this era are Cem Sultan (d. 1495), the brother of Bayezid II (1481-1512) held captive for many years in France and Italy; the judge and courtier Ahmed Pasha (d.c. 1496) and Necati, the son of a slave (d. 1509). Also discussed is the work of Mihri Hatun of Amasya (d. after 1512), one of the few known Ottoman women poets. Gibb provides extended summaries of the stories of Yusuf and Zuleika, and Leyla and Mecnun, both composed by Hamdi (d. 1509), as early Ottoman examples of traditional romances in the mesnevi style of rhymed couplets.

Volume II contains two prefaces. The first is an obituary of Gibb by E. G. Browne, followed by a list of the Persian and Turkish manuscripts in Gibb's library at the time of his death. The second is Gibb's intended preface, countering criticisms of the first volume with a robust defence of his decision to use an archaic form of English in his translations.

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