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Davlatova Kholida
Research Associate,
Department of Research and Publication of Written Heritage Center
Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan
E-mail : holeeda@mail.ru

**Influence and reputation of the Persian language and poems in the courts of the
Ottoman sultans and recognition of Persian speaking poets
(XV-XVI centuries)**

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History is a mirror full of mystery to which the mankind strives to attain a clear vision in understanding and contemplation of all of its controversial aspects. Familiarity with and study of literature of any period and time is thought to be an interesting exercise around which numerous researchers pondered and expressed their thoughts. In particular, the Tajik and Persian literature is one of the most prominent platforms, where the greatest scholars, thinkers and researchers of the world demonstrated their strength. Persian language is a language of poetry and literature, which with its inherent subtlety and attractiveness had, has and will have its adherers and successors around the world. If this was not the case, the most prominent orientalists, researchers of Tajik and Persian literature from all over the world such as Goethe, Helmut Ritter, Belters, Jan Rypka, A.V. Boldirev, V.A. Zhukovsky, K.G. Zaleman, F.E. Korsh, G. Grunebaum, Blosher, A. Korben, Z. Lazar, L. Massignon, A. Masse, M. Mole, Jiri Bechka, Sayeed Nafisi, Badeuzzamoni Furuzonfar, Abdulhusain Zarrinkub, Malikushuaro Bahor, Abdumannon Nasriddinov and others would not have spent their all lives in exploring the literature.

Namely this fragrance, originality and attractiveness of words made the sultans and viziers, thinkers and scholars of the great Ottoman Empire, which go back to the Seljuk dynasty, fall in love and be fascinated with Persian language and literature. Persian literature of the Ottoman period has a very interesting history with rises and falls, and its various aspects still attract the attention of researchers. Although scholars and orientalists in Europe, Iran and Russia have done a lot of research on the history of the Ottoman state, less attention was paid to the influence and reputation of the Persian language in the Ottoman Empire. Recognition of Persian-speaking Ottoman poets in the courts of the Ottoman sultans requires serious scientific research.

Some of the researchers such as Ibni Bibi¹, A.D. Novichev², Muhammad Amini Rayohi,³Dmitry Kitsikish,⁴Shodi Oidin,⁵and several others using the historical evidences have interesting researches related to the process of emergence and development of the Ottoman dynasty. One may say that almost all of them have the same belief.

According to the writings of A.D. Novichev⁶, the Seljuks attacked Iran in 1040 and conquered it in 1055. Later, they conquered Iraq, Syria, Azerbaijan and part of today's Armenia. As a result, a "Great Seljuks" statehood emerged in the historical area.

The history proves that following the settlement of Seljuks in the Asia Minor, the Persian language gradually began to play a significant role in this land. Persian became the language of court's correspondence, communication, the language of poetry and literature as well as education.

This situation was not accidental. The reason for the advantage of Persian language was that the Seljuks of Byzantium previously lived in Iran and were accustomed to the Persian language, culture and civilization and it was difficult for them to switch to other language. From the other hand, Persian language was familiar and clear to all those who dealt with paperwork management and working with this language was easy for them.

According to the historical sources, the founder of Ottoman state was Ertugurl, who earlier ruled a small beylik⁷. There were also other bigger and stronger beyliks in the region. However, the Ottoman dynasty emerged with Osman - his son.

Osman took over his father's khanate after his death in 1281. When the Seljuk Sultan had to leave the capital city due to the battle between the seljuks and mongols, Osman felt the freedom began to reign independently. For this reason, a number of researchers recognized the year of 1299 as the beginning of formation of the Ottoman state.

According to Ibn Bibi⁸ - one of the first chronologer and turkologist "five languages were spoken in the land of Byzantium, the majority of local people spoke Greek language, the

¹Ibn Bibi (el-Hüseyin b. Muhammed b. Ali el-Ca'feri Er-Rugadi). El Evamirü'l-Ala'iyе Fi'l-Umuri'l-Ala'iyе (Selçuk Name). Çeviren Prof. Dr. Mürsel Öztürk. Cilt I—II. Ankara, 1996.

²A. D. Novichev. Turkey. Short history. Moscow-1965, Nauka, p.270.

³Muhammad Amini Rayohi. Persian language and literature. Tehran, 1369, p.308.

⁴Dimitri Kitsikis, L'Empire ottoman. France-fevrier, 1991, 125 p.

⁵Shodi Oidin, Elements of Iranian culture and literature in Ottoman poetry, Amir Kabir Edition, Tehran-1385

⁶A. D. Novichev. Turkey. Short history. Moscow-1965, Nauka, p.270. p. 7-8.

⁷Author's note. Beylic – a small feudal property in the land of Seljuks, which was controlled by a rich person. For the first time beyliks emerged in the end of XI century in Anatolia.

⁸Ibn Bibi (el-Hüseyin b. Muhammed b. Ali el-Ca'feri Er-Rugadi). El Evamirü'l-Ala'iyе Fi'l-Umuri'l-Ala'iyе (Selçuk Name). Çeviren Prof. Dr. Mürsel Öztürk. Cilt I—II. Ankara, 1996.

minority spoke Armenian language, the newly settled people spoke Turkish, the religious and official language was Arabic, but Persian language prevailed over all these languages”.

There was a great wave of migration from Persia to the Asia Minor following the Mongols’ invasion of the Khorasan. There were poets, scholars, thinkers, craftsmen, architects and others among those immigrants.

Muhammad Amin Rayohi indicates in his book: “Azaluddin Kulj Arslon the Second – the first great Seljuk sultan of Byzantium divided the conquered land among his eleven sons and appointed each of them the ruler of a town and a district. A Persian culture and a center of Persian language and poetry was formed under each of these rules. And each of them competed in the attraction of the Persian statesmen and secretaries, poets, architects and craftsmen”.⁹

Thus, Persian language and literature reached the apex of its popularity in the Ottoman domain over time. Persian literature, language and culture would leave its footprint in each step. Classical Persian poets were role models for Turkish poets. They tried to understand and use the beauty and subtleties of Persian poetry. Each person who considered himself chosen and influential spoke Persian and was aware of Persian poets and writers’ works. All Ottoman poets and everyone who had a talent would certainly compose poems in Persian. The poets even would present their Persian divans in order to make happy the Sultan and raise higher their status among others.

Medieval literature of Turks, which is one of the most important manifestations of their culture, consists mainly of poetry. It was mainly supported by the courts in the 15th and 16th centuries. Some of the sultans, such as Murod II, Mehmed II, Bayazid II, Salim I, Suleiman II, Salimi II and many others, were also poets. Ottoman court poets replaced the Turkish language, which was a little harsh, with Persian. Namely, the Persian poetry reached its climax and outstanding poets emerged during the reign of Sultan Suleyman Kanuni, one of the greatest sultans of the Ottoman empire and the connoisseur of Persian literature. The most famous of them are Fuzuli (1494-1556) and Boqi (1526-1600), who earned a high reputation while still alive and received the title “Sultan of Poets”. Also Khayoli (1559), Nasimi (1404), Shaikhi (1431), Najoti (1509), Ravoni (1524), Lomei (1532), Hayrati (1535), Fighoni (1532) and several other poets, each of them had his own special status at court. Some fragments of their poems are attached in the photos below, which are the main sources of our work.

The development of medieval literature of the Ottoman Turks is a clear example of its evolution, in which the norms of Persian literature have a significant influence. It is worth noting that during this period much attention was paid to the translation of Persian works into Turkish. It is safe to say that the works of Tajik and Persian classics were first brought to this land and

⁹Doctor Muhammad Amin Rayohi. Persian language and literature. Tehran, 1369, 308 pages. p.27-28

digested in the form of a translation and later on the tradition of composing poems, *mesnevi* writing and collecting *divans* spread all over the empire.

In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire became more powerful by expanding its territory through the inclusion of North Africa, the Balkans and the Middle East. In 1453, Istanbul was declared the capital city of the empire and became the center meeting for eastern and western civilization. Poets from Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan and other eastern countries were attracted to further strengthen literature and raise the culture in the capital. By this time, calligraphy had reached its peak of development and popularity. The court poets not only competed among themselves in writing separate verses, but also in the creation of *divans*. In addition to the form of poem they tried to add to the verses higher meaning and a special taste, so that their poems could reach perfection. Suleyman Kanuni also wrote poems under Muhibbi pseudonym and in one poem he says:

ز چشم فتنهجوییت دل خراب است
جگر در آتش عشقت کباب است

The eloquence and construction of the difficult meanings that are characteristic of Persian poets is often found in Persian poetry. For instance, a ghazal from Khayoli:

خطت تا از سواد شب رقم زد صفحه مهرا
برو دیدم بعشک تر نیشته بارک الله را
چو ببری سر زلفینرا امید دیدار است
که نزدیکست هنگام سحر شبها کوتهرا
اگرچی خویشرا ترگس ز اهل دید میدارد
چو نیکو بنگری او هم بکوری می رود رهرا
میرس از اهل صورت ماجرای عاشقی ای دل
کزین معنی وقوفی نیست جز دلهای آگهرا
خیالی دوش از این معنی ز تسبیح تو دم میزد
ک تعلیم سخن میکرد مرغان سحرگهرا

There were also women in the harem of the Sultan, who had a great interest in poetry, wrote poems themselves, and had a special status among poets and fans of poetry. They include Mehri Khotun (16 century), Zainab Khotun (15 century) and Dukhtari Solor (14 century), who created poems using her father's name and her talent was appreciated in the court of Boyazid II. Their rich poetry deserves a special study.

Since the 16th century, Istanbul has been one of the great intellectual and literary centers of the empire and the entire Islamic world. In particular, the largest libraries were built in the

capital of the Ottoman Empire, where rare and exceptional manuscripts were collected for Sultans.

In his book Zabeuloh Safa indicates: “The inexhaustible wealth of the Ottoman sultans and their conquest of many Islamic countries turned their court into a social center for a large group of scholars and writers from different countries over the world. A large group of these scholars and writers emigrated from Iran since the beginning of the Safavid rule and for a limited or unlimited period of time remained in the Ottoman Empire and published books in Arabic and Persian. In addition, due to the special interest of the Ottoman sultans and great nobles in the Persian language and literature, their capital city became a big shelter for poets and writers and a point of collection of multiple copies of books, which have been written in Persian by Iranian scholars and writers were collected in the Sultans’ libraries and in great nobles. Even now, many of those books are still kept in the libraries”.

In the Ottoman period, knowledge of Persian language and script was necessary for each educated and enlightened individual. Zabeuloh Safa says the following regarding the important role of poems of Persian poets in the Ottoman land: “...in addition, Persian was used as half official state language over the vast territory of the Ottoman Empire, even in today’s Yugoslavia Persian language and the work of outstanding Iranian poets, namely Saadi, Mavlavi and Haafiz were widely known and taught in the families of nobles”.

Along with expansion of the empire’s territory, the number of poets and scholars also increased. The sultans attracted poets and scholars with good salaries and gift to raise the level of cultural life of the country. In their turn, the poets initially would create their unique poems based on the rich vocabulary and the environment of classical Persian poetry, keeping the Turkish grammar, however, the structure of expression gradually evolved completely into Persian.

Masterfully using fanciful expressions specific to Persian poetry the inspired poets of the Ottoman period adorned their poems in all poetic genres such as *kasida*, *ghazal*, *mukhammas*, *tarjeband*, *tarkibband*, *rubais*, *couplets*, etc. They even created *mesnevi* with a deep philosophical and divine meaning.

There are many instances of the connection of Turkish poets with Persian literature that can be seen nowadays. Particularly, this can be observed in Persian works translated or commented in Turkish language.

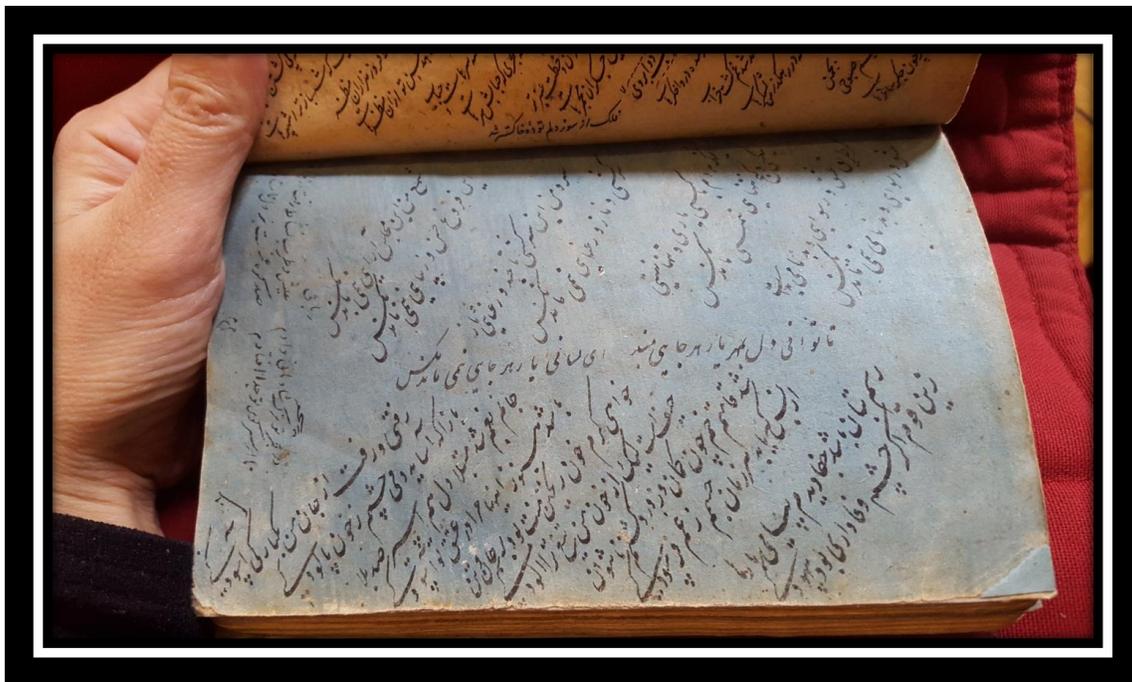
One of the known Turkish researchers, who reviewed and explored the Persian works, is Abdulbaqi Gulpinorli, who has a book titled “*Mavlaviyaba’dazMaulana*”.¹⁰ Though his writings are in Turkish, the review of Persian literature indicate the extent to which people in Turkey are

¹⁰Abdulbaqi Gulpinorli. “*Mavlaviya ba’d az Maulana*”. Translation of Doctor Tawfiq H. Sabjani. Printed by Kayhan–1366. V. 1. 745 pages.

attached to the Persian literature. Doctor Tawfiq Sabjani, who is Turk himself, translated this work into Persian. It means that there is a very close connection, since there is a need to translate into Persian the comments for Persian poetry, which were originally in Turkish language.

In addition, Sudi – a Turkish researcher has numerous explanations and interpretations to the Haafiz work¹¹ and to “Bustan”¹² and “Gulistan” of Saadi. Each of them deserve a separate research and study.

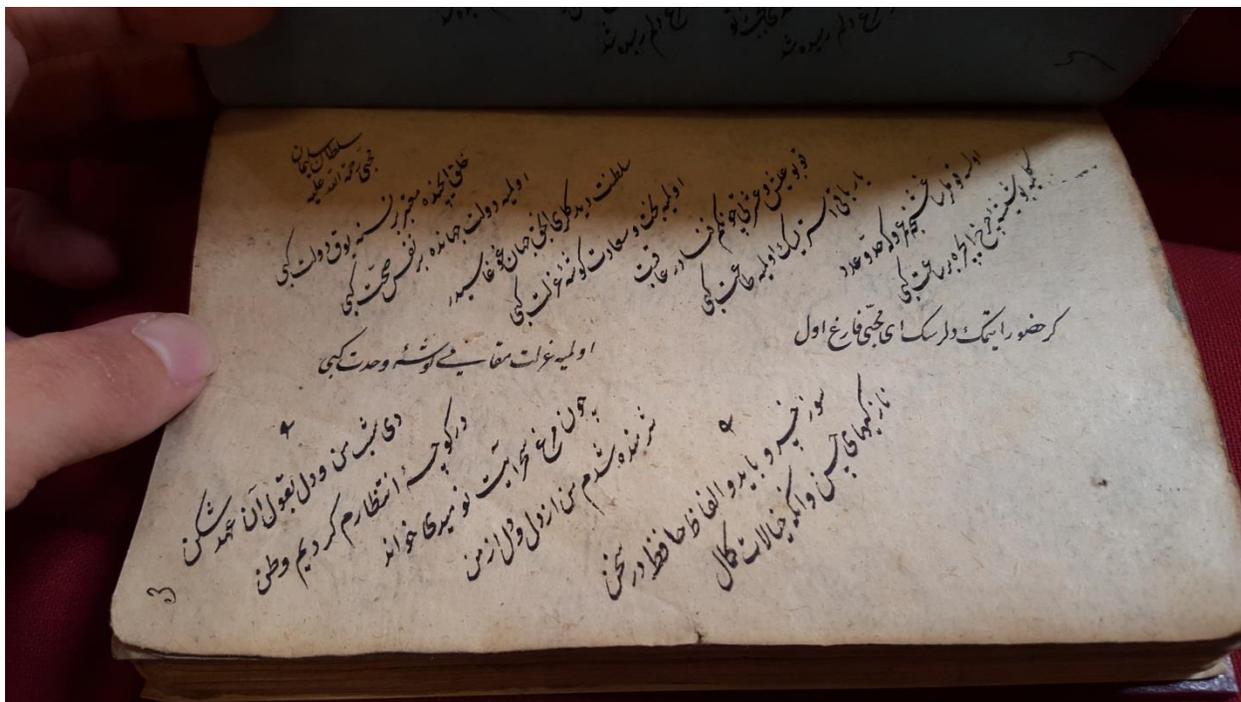
In conclusion, the above reflects the extent of close bonds and ties of the Ottoman poets with that of Persian, who tried to become closer through literature and poetry. The Persian poems would serve as a reason for a significant raise of the poets’ status and respect among others in the court of the Ottoman sultans. As witnessed in the process of study, the Ottoman poets achieved the highest command of the phrases and expressions in the Persian poems and created such some beautiful descriptions that could bewilder anyone. And indeed, the study of the literature of that period is of great importance for the literary scholars. Using the copies of obtained manuscripts owned by BNF, other aspects of the Persian literature of the Ottoman period will be studied, and the research, study and introducing these works without doubt would be a new page in the Tajik literature study.



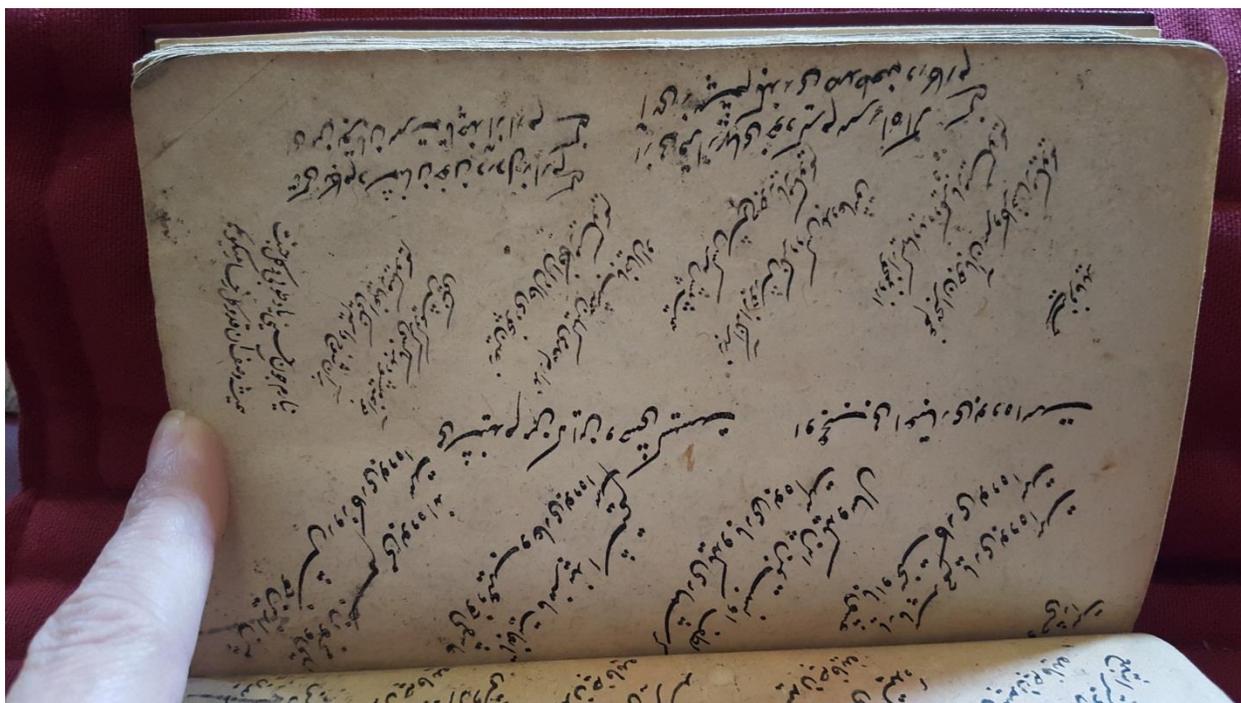
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¹¹Muhammad SudiiBasnavi. Interpretation of Sudi to Haafiz. Translation of Doctor IsmatSattorzoda. In four volumes. Printed by Zarrin– 1366.

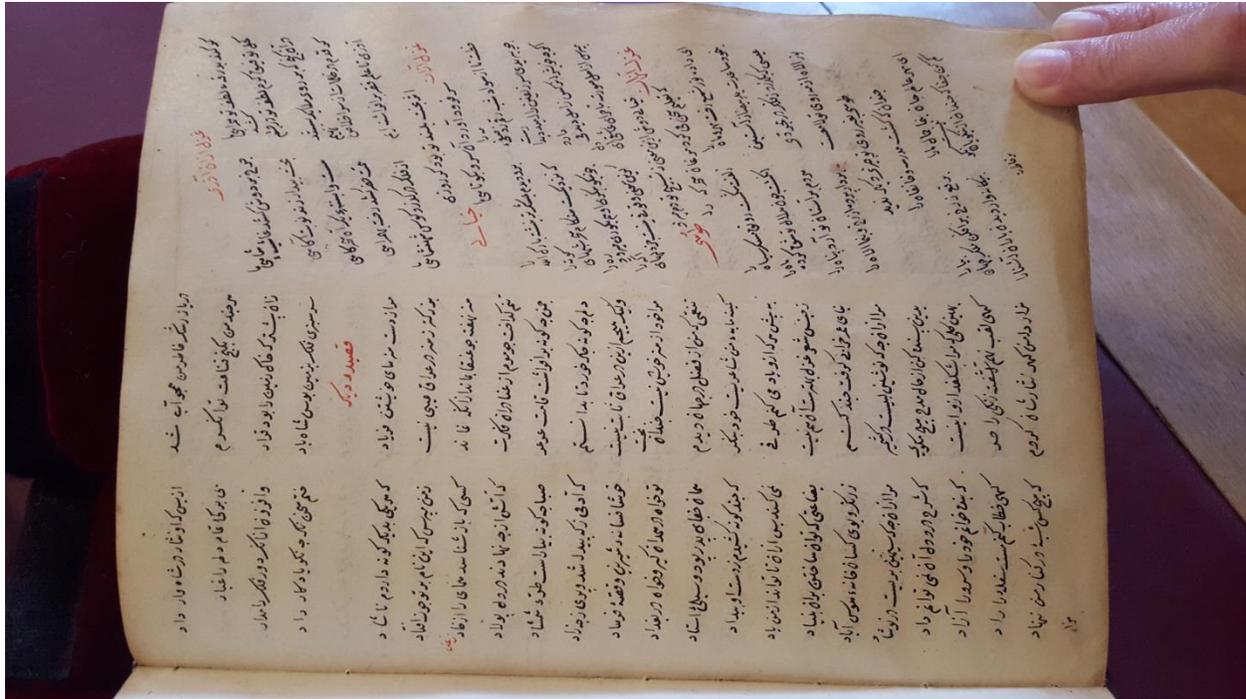
¹²Sudi. Description of “Bustan” of Saadi. Translation of Doctor Akbar Behruz. In two volumes. Tebriz, Ozarobodagon printing house-1352.



A page 3a of the manuscript 800 of the Supplément persan of BNF. Bayaz. Which was captured by me.



A page of the manuscript 789 of the Supplément persan of BNF. A collection of poems. Which was captured by me.



A page 396 of the manuscript 826 of the *Supplément persan* of BNF. A collection of poems. Which was captured by me.

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