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[Sudi's introduction to his commentary on Hafez's *Divan*; MS 933, fols. 1b–2a, The Treasury Collection, Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul.]

### **In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate**

Praise be to God who granted me success in explaining sciences and knowledge, the immaculate language of Arabs, and the learned language of Persians. Blessings and peace be upon His most virtuous created being Muhammad, who is the most eloquent and noble in lineage, and upon his holy family and righteous followers.

Then let it be known that the writer of these pages and the narrator of what is written, this humble and sinful servant, namely, Sudi, the poor, says as follows:

One day, at the most auspicious of times and at the happiest of hours, the governor of Madina, Ömer Efendi, who was the most intimate of companions and the most special of friends, may God bless his soul and may double his reward in Paradise, came, unceremoniously as usual, into my humble house, kissed my hand three times and said: “this is what I ask of you: you should write a commentary on Hafez’s *Divan* in such a way that it would be useful to seekers and beneficial for the beginners. In short, it would not suggest any extended meaning or mystical interpretation but just explain the grammar [of the text] following the methods of the Arabic grammarians and restrict itself to the basic meaning of the verses.”

Decorated with different kinds of knowledge and branches of science, Ömer Efendi was the compendium of merits and honors, the possessor of benevolence and beneficence, the abode of generosity and munificence, and the source of benefaction and bounteousness. If Hatam saw

his nobility and generosity he would be mourning because of his zealous jealousy.<sup>1</sup> Ömer Efendi is such that the world has not seen his equal since the nine revolving spheres started to rotate.

Upon his saying so, I took his request to be a command and his behest a godsend. Because the deceased and forgiven [Ömer Efendi] was so generous and benevolent to this praying man that neither is so a father to his son nor a brother to a brother. As such, only the one who knows me and him, the deceased, can so testify.

It is hoped the readers of this commentary may not forget to bless the deceased as well as this base Sudi as they bless Muhammad and his noble family. It is expected from the people of justice that they correct with the pen of forgiveness and indulgence those places in this commentary where errors and mistakes occur, and not make an effort to show and reveal its shortcomings. Because I confess it is not within my capacity and limits to write a commentary on such an intricate book. However, as mentioned previously, I was importuned to do so. Nonetheless, I ask the readers of this commentary to cast a fair eye on it.

#### Couplet

The eye of contentment is dull to all faults  
The eye of discontentment, however, reveals the shortcomings

Let it be known that the noble name of *Khajah* Hafez is Shams al-Din Muhammad.<sup>2</sup> Among the learned men, he is famous as “the Tongue of the Hidden” and “the Teller of Secrets.” His lustrous poems are the envy of the spring of life, and the daughters of his thought are the cause of jealousy for maidens and boys of Paradise. By solid words he sweetened the palate of the common people, and by clear meanings he added salt to the mouths of the elites. Thus the doors of acquaintance of the men of the Seen have been open to him and the splendor of the light in the

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<sup>1</sup> Hatam: the name of a legendary Arab character that lived in pre-Islamic times and was famous for his generosity.

<sup>2</sup> The word *khajah* means lord, master. It is an honorific title of a man of great dignity.

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eyes of the men of the Unseen has grown. For every learned man he composed poetry suitable to their occasions. He invented pleasant and rare meanings for everyone and encapsulated abounding meanings in few words. His world-conquering *ghazals* [lyric poems] reached the borders of the countries in Turkistan and India in the least period of time, and his heart-pleasing words arrived the regions and districts of the two Iraqs and Azerbaijan in the shortest space of time. Without having his excitement-stirring *ghazals* recited, the ritual music and dancing of the dervishes would not become fervent, and without the tasty sweetmeats of his taste-arousing words having uttered, the gatherings of the rulers would not be embellished and adorned. Still more, the outcry of his incitement would make the hues and cries of the passionate possible, and the chant of the wine-worshippers would acquire splendor with the gurgle of his poems. This has been allegorized as follows:

Verse

The *ghazal*-singing of Hafez reached to such an extent that  
The firmament forgot the melodies of Venus and her pleasing lyre  
In time he did absolute justice to lyric poetry  
In a way no poet composed poetry in that way  
As you memorize his pleasant-flowing poetry, say:  
May a thousand mercies of God be on the soul of Hafez

However his diligent study of the *Qur'an*, his regular appointment as teacher of the Sultan, his annotation of the *Kashshaf* and the *Miftah*, his perusal of the *Matali'* and the *Misbah*, his studies on literary techniques, and his admiring interest in the works of the Arab poets prevented him from bringing his dispersed *ghazals* together and withheld him from assembling his heart-pleasing couplets on a string of necklace. Qivam al-Din Hasan used to bring up in conversation the rough draft of these couplets over and over again in the study room of the *madrasah* [college] which he built for Hafez and say, in the course of conversation, that he should string these

unique gems of value on a necklace and arrange these illustrious pearls in a line, so that it would become a necklace for the graceful necks of the people of the time and an amulet for the jeweled girdles of the men of the time.

Hafez entrusted the raising of this edifice of poetry to the unwarranted times and offered excuses amounting to the excuses of the people of the period until, in the year 791 A.H., he committed the life entrusted to him to the guardians of God's decree and determination and carried the garment of existence out of the narrow vestibule of death. His immaculate soul joined the dwellers of the sublime world, and he became a pure companion of the black-eyed maidens of Paradise after separation from his body.

#### Chronogram

In the *Abjad* year of *ba*, *sad*, and *zal*<sup>3</sup>  
From the day of the auspicious *Hijra* of Ahmad<sup>4</sup>  
He set out toward the highest Heaven  
The unique man of the era, Shams al-Din Muhammad  
When I passed by his pure grave  
I beheld the purity and splendor of the tomb

After Hafez passed away, some of his companions, with commitment to companionship and obligation to respect friendship, arranged and organized his dispersed *ghazals* into a *divan*. May God set his soul at rest and perpetuate his prosperity in the rooms of Heaven. Amen, Lord of the worlds! God is the one who grants success in the road of righteousness. And He is merciful to his subjects, and sufficient for us is God, and He is the best Disposer of affairs.

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<sup>3</sup> The *Abjad* is a decimal numeral system in which the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet are assigned numerical values. According to this system, the letters *bā* [ب], *sād* [ص] and *zāl* [ذ] have the numerical values, respectively, of 2, 90 and 700. Therefore, the sum of the numerical values of the three letters (792 A.H.) gives Hafez's date of death, which is 1389/1390 C.E.

<sup>4</sup> *Hijra* is the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers to the city of Madina in 622 CE. Alternate spellings of this Arabic word in English are *Hijrah* and *Hegira*.