



ĠANĪ, QĀSEM

ĠANĪ, QĀSEM (b. Sabzavār, 3 Ramaẓān 1310/21 March 1893; d. San Francisco, 9 Farvardīn 1331 Š./29 March 1952; [Figure 1](#)), physician, diplomat, and well-known scholar on the poet Ḥāfeẓ. He was a prolific writer and, during his many years abroad, corresponded with several eminent figures of the time. His diaries, notebooks, and letters have been compiled and edited in twelve volumes under the general supervision of his son, Cyrus Ghani (*Yāddāsthā-ye Doktor Qāsem Ġanī/The Memoirs of Dr. Ghassem Ghani*, London, 1980-84; see under *Memoirs* below). His eye for the telling detail, and his habit of jotting down daily events immediately, and methodically recording the date and place of encounters and incidents, make these volumes a valuable documentary source for his life and that of many of his contemporaries.

Ġanī was born into a moderately prosperous family of small landholders. On the maternal side some of his close relatives were prominent members of the Bahai faith, a fact that caused him some consternation early in his political career (S. Ḥ. Amīn, "Doktor Qāsem Ġanī," *Yaġmā* 24, 1350 Š./1972, pp., 599-606, p. 602) He was first educated in his hometown's traditional *maktabs*. Around 1908 he was sent to Tehran to continue his education. He attended Tarbiyat, a Bahai school (see BAHAI FAITH v.) with a modern curriculum and then enrolled in Dār-al-Fonūn (q.v.), where he studied for two years. In 1913 he set out for Beirut for further studies. He first attended a French pre-medical school run by the Jesuits (*Yāddāsthā* I, pp. 101-5) and after the closure of the French educational institutions in Lebanon during the First World War, he learnt English and transferred to the American University of Beirut in 1915,



where he received a medical degree in 1919. He gives an affectionate account of his teachers and student days in his memoirs (*Yāddāsthā* I, pp. 105-84).

Ġanī's career can be divided into three distinct if somewhat overlapping periods. In the first, he was devoted to his profession as a physician. Soon after graduation he returned to his native city and began practicing medicine. He established a hospital there and spent most of his time serving the local community. He set out for Paris in early 1923 and for about two years received specialized training in internal medicine. He spent the latter part of 1925 and much of 1926 back in Sabzavār, working as a physician. In 1926 he returned to Paris for a further two years. There, he met Moḥammad Qazvīnī, who became a lifelong mentor and friend. Their correspondence, included in his memoirs along with additional biographical sketches of Qazvīnī, is a valuable source for the study of this important scholar (*Yāddāsthā* V, pt. 2, pp. 163-328). In 1928, Ġanī returned to Persia and resumed his medical practice, first in Sabzavār and subsequently in Mašhad and Tehran.

He attended more and more to his literary vocation, and thus began the second phase of his life, which extended well into the mid-1930s. By then he had developed friendships and corresponded with the renowned musician and composer 'Alī-Naqī Wazīrī and with the great painter Moḥammad Ġaffārī, Kamāl-al-Molk (q.v.). As in the case of Qazvīnī, the correspondence and other documents concerning Kamāl-al-Molk's life and works (*Yāddāsthā* V, pt. i, pp. 10-162; X, pp. 677-748) are highly informative. He also collaborated with other outstanding scholars. He assisted 'Alī-Akbar Fayyāz (q.v.) with his first edition of *Tārīk-e Bayhaqī* (Tehran, 1324 Š./1945); and similarly helped Moḥammad-'Alī Forūġī (q.v.) in editing *Robā'iyāt-e Kayyām* (Tehran, 1319 Š./1930) and 'Abbās Eqbāl Aštīānī (q.v.) with the publication of the literary journal *Yādgār*. Most important of all is the support he gave in later years to Qazvīnī in collecting and collating manuscripts, in their well-known critical edition of Ḥāfeẓ in 1941, reprinted several times and regarded by many scholars as a major landmark in the history of editing classical Persian texts. The three above mentioned editions were all published under joint names. The late 1920s and the 1930s were therefore Ġanī's most prolific years as a writer and scholar. Nearly all of his books were written in this period.

During most of these years, he also taught at the Faculty of Medicine at Tehran, where he lectured on medical ethics. Subsequently, he began to teach at the Faculty of Theology (*Dāneškada-ye ma'qūl o manqūl*). His lectures on psychology in these two institutions, in which he outlined major paradigms of

psychology in the West, were later published (*Ma'refat al-nafs*, Tehran 1316 Š./1937).

The third period of ĠanĪ's life began in the mid-1930s when he entered politics. Beginning in 1935, he served for about seven years as a Parliamentary representative from Mašhad (*Yāddāsthā* XII, p. h). In 1938 he went to Egypt to assist in the arrangements for the marriage of Princess Fawzīya to the Persian crown prince, Moḥammad-Režā, and in April 1939 he went back as part of the royal entourage to celebrate the wedding (*Yāddāsthā* VII; VIII, *passim*). His proficiency in Arabic and his friendship with Maḥmūd Jam (q.v.), prime minister at the time, were both apparently instrumental in ensuring his membership in the Persian delegation (Cyrus Ghani, interviewed by the author, 9 July 1999).

In 1941 ĠanĪ was minister of health for a couple of months. In 1944, he was appointed minister of education but he resigned from the post less than a month later. In April 1945, he was part of the Persian delegation to the San Francisco conference which drew up the Charter of the United Nations (*Yāddāsthā* II, pp. 34-54). In May 1947 he was appointed ambassador to Egypt with the specific mandate of facilitating a reconciliation in Moḥammad-Režā Shah's troubled marriage to Fawzīya. When these attempts failed, he was instructed to work out the details of the divorce. He also helped with the transportation of Režā Shah's remains, hitherto temporarily interred in Egypt, to Persia. An important and enduring part of his memoirs, described in volumes VII and VIII, are his first-hand accounts of these activities. In August of 1948 he was appointed ambassador to Turkey, where he again kept a personal diary noting down daily events both there and at home, including a long and moving obituary of Qazvīnī (*Yāddāsthā* III, pp. 146-73). While still in that post in 1949, he was asked to travel to the United States as part of Moḥammad Režā Shah's entourage. The invitation further strengthened his expectation to be named as ambassador to the United States, a position he greatly coveted (*Yāddāsthā* XII, p. 407) and thought he had been all but been promised (*Yāddāsthā* XII, p. 411). When after months of waiting the appointment again failed to materialize, ĠanĪ, embittered, resigned his diplomatic post in Turkey and chose self-imposed exile in the United States. His own analysis of the factors which prevented him from gaining the post reveals his anti-British and pro-American sentiments (Y. Mahdawī, "Negāh-ī be *Kāṭerāt-e Doktor ĠanĪ*," *Āyanda* 8, 1361 Š./1982, pp. 553-61). Britain's manipulations of the ambassadorial post were, according to him, related to the



British policy of preventing the United States from gaining influence in Persia (*Yāddāsthā* XII, p. 411), and British ‘mercenaries,’ most of whom he regarded as his own personal political enemies, are cited by him as a factor for the dire state of the country (*Yāddāsthā* XI, p. 186; XII, p. 435). The last years of his life were spent traveling, reading and writing as well as convalescing from numerous health problems. He died in San Francisco and was buried nearby, at the Woodlawn Memorial Park Cemetery (*Yāddāsthā* XII, p. 516).

PUBLICATIONS

Ġanī’s writings cover a wide range (for a partial bibliography see *Yāddāsthā* XII, p. z–h; *Āyanda* 8, 1361 Š./1982, p. 61). His first published work dealt with the life and works of Avicenna (*Ebn Sīnā*, Tehran, 1315 Š./1936). He went on to write on such diverse topics as the virtues of eugenics, the history of medicine in Islamic societies, and also translated into Persian, with extensive annotations, three novels by Anatole France: *Thaïs*, *La rôtisserie de la reine Pédauque*, and *La révolte des anges* (*Tā’īs*, Tehran, 1308 Š./1929; *‘Ešyān-e fereštagān*, Tehran, 1309 Š./1930; *Berīyān-pazī-e Maleka-ye Sabā*, Tehran, 1310 Š./1931). His last published essay in his lifetime dealt with the philosophical foundations of Sufism (*Baḥt-ī dar tašawwof*, Tehran, 1331 Š./1952).

The Memoirs. The whole corpus of his at times important memoirs is a patchwork of historical documents, diaries, correspondence and personal observations, sometimes in a vituperative style. For example some contemporary and potential political rivals are lampooned in short but biting sketches, as in the case of Šādeq Reżāzāda Šafaq (*Yāddāsthā* XI, pp. 23-24). In another entry, several important contemporaries, including Moḥammad-‘Alī Forūgī and Naṣr-Allāh Entezām (qq.v.) are vilified in quick succession (*Yāddāsthā* VIII, p. 38). The former is dismissed as ineffectual and politically naive while the latter is, here and elsewhere, the target of much more acerbic treatment (*Yāddāsthā* XI, p. 61; XII, p. 411). Ġanī’s gradual feelings of frustration in his political ambitions also affected the way his erstwhile political patrons, most notably Ḥosayn ‘Alā, rise and fall in his estimation. Early passages of adulation where he is showered with fulsome praise as “one of the best and noblest of all present-day Iranians” (*Yāddāsthā* II, pp. 75-76) give way to savage and frequent vilification of his wife and her immediate relations (*Yāddāsthā* XI, pp. 156-58) and later by downright contempt for ‘Alā’s supposedly feeble character, dismissing him either as *safīh* (i.e. devoid of mental faculties; *Yāddāsthā* XI, pp. 40, 192) or at best possessing the mental age of a ten year old deficient in knowledge and comprehension apart from

fluency in French and English (*Yāddāsthā* XI, p. 151). A less controversial and perhaps more enduring aspect of the importance of Ġanī's writings for social history was his persistent attempt to collect reminiscences of other political and literary luminaries, including their domestic and family life and relationships. Also of particular significance are the brief memoirs of 'Abbāsqolī Golšā'īān (q.v.), found in Ġanī's library in 1337 Š./1958 by his son Cyrus, and published for the first time as part of the *Memoirs*. They provide important information on Reżā Shah's last days of rule and the character of 'Alī-Akbar Dāvar (q.v.; *Yāddāsthā* XI, pp. 517-604).

The editing of the volumes reflects the disparate nature of the material, and follows a thematic rather than chronological arrangement. The early volumes suffer greatly from careless and deficient editing resulting in many errors leading to the necessity for the inclusion of the long corrigenda (*Yāddāsthā* XI, p. d; XII, pp. 321-93). Volume 6 is a meticulous attempt at literary detection to locate the original lines of Ḥāfeẓ used by Gertrude Bell (q.v.) in her fine but free translations, *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz* (Ġanī used the 1928 ed., see E. Yarshater, preface to volume VI, p. 2). Volume 8 of the diaries has a separate publishing history of its own. The manuscript of this volume had been discovered in an antique shop in Tehran by Moḥammad-'Alī Şawtī who published it several years later with a preface by Moḥammad-Ebrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī as *Kāṭerāt-e Doktor Qāsem Ġanī* (Tehran, 1361 Š./1982). It was reissued again as volume 8 with a preface by Cyrus Ghani (London, 1982). It should also be pointed out that the published volumes contain some omissions of names and passages for a variety of reasons which are explained in the prefaces by the different editors (M.-'A. Şawtī's preface to *Kāṭerāt-e Doktor Qāsem Ġanī*, p. 8; preface to *Yāddāsthā* I, p. 3).

Contribution to the study of Ḥāfeẓ. Ġanī's pioneering work on the life and times of Ḥāfeẓ (*Baḥṭ dar āṭār o afkār o aḥwāl-e Ḥāfeẓá*, 2 vols, Tehran, 1321-22 Š./1942-43) is a useful compilation of documents for the poet's biography. Ġanī has enough historical acumen to remind his readers frequently about the anecdotal nature of much of the historical accounts presented. His marginalia on the *Dīvān* has also been published (*Yāddāsthā-ye Doktor Ġanī dar ḥawāšī-e dīvān-e Ḥāfeẓ*, Tehran, 1358 Š./1979). In fact throughout Ġanī's life and writing, Ḥāfeẓ has a constant presence. The abundant allusions and quotations from his poetry, juxtaposed with the account of daily events in the *Memoirs*, are clear textual traces of this influence and presence.