

96. Persian 1, Qajar Iran, early 19th century

Contents: *Masnavī-i ma'navī* by Jalal al-Dīn Rūmī, a poem on Islamic spirituality.

Folios: 311 fols. (the last one blank); very fine, waxed paper, 25.7 x 16.4 cm.

Ruling and script: Text laid out in four columns inside a ruled frame of red, green and gold. In the frame at the edge of the page is a red, blue and gold floral corner motif top right of the versos and top left of the rectos, with numbering. Similar titlepieces and decorated floral margins as well as gilded text, appear at intervals throughout the manuscript. The text is vocalised *naskhī* with headings in *ṣulṣ* and glosses in *nasta'liq* in the margins.

Binding: Luxurious lacquer binding, with roses and birds in cartouches decorating the front and back (colour plate 6). The inner covers (plate 37) show birds and butterflies on branches of blossom.

⁴⁸ B. Robinson studied MS Persian 9, and his list (now incomplete) of the miniatures is in the library. Two manuscripts have cut-out descriptions from a printed text, one of which refers to 'Dawes'. I have not been able to establish what this was; possibly a sale catalogue. I am grateful to Dr. B. Brend for her preliminary comments on eight of the illustrated manuscripts and to the staff of the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library for permission to study comparative manuscripts in London.

⁴⁹ The unillustrated MS Persian 13 with the text of Yusuf wa Zulaykhā was also from the library of Rendel Harris and was presented in 1913.

A parallel exists in the interior covers of a binding in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (132 & 132A - 1885 I.D.), which were made in southern Persia and are dated 1218 A.H./1803-4 A.D.⁵⁰

Provenance: Southern Persian, early 19th century, on the basis of the binding. A parallel for the intricate floral frontispieces is in a manuscript of Jami, *Yūsuf wa Zulaykhā* signed by Muḥammad Hādī and dated 1230 A.H./1814 A.D.⁵¹

Illumination: Elaborate titlepieces and frames, with intertwining floral motifs in gold, orange, green and pale blue against rich blue and gold backgrounds, appear in fols. 8v-9r, 56v-57r, 100v-101r and 157v-158r. These openings have floral margins, gilded text in cartouches and gilding between the lines of the text. Pages immediately preceding each of these decorated openings (excepting fol. 7v) also have floral margins, gilded text in the two outer columns and gilding between the lines. Simpler titlepieces comprising cartouches with gold text, against red, blue and green grounds, appear throughout the manuscript.

⁵⁰ The covers have an inscription saying they were finished by Ḥusayn Qulī Khān: D. Haldane, *Islamic Bookbindings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (The World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983), no. 119, with colour plate.

⁵¹ Sotheby's Catalogue, *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, Friday 12th October 1990, 144-5, no. 294 with plate.