

## ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS OF KARL FABERGÉ. II: RĀGAMĀLĀ MINIATURES OF THE ALBUM (*MURAQQA'*) (PART TWO)

The most important jewelers of the nineteenth century — Lui Cartier, Henri Vever and Karl Fabergé — all had collections of Eastern manuscripts and miniatures that inspired them to create the marvels of their art that today adorn the world's great museums and private collections. These outstanding artists and jewelers most likely did not fully understand the ancient traditions that inspired the examples of Eastern miniature and calligraphy in their collections. But it was undoubtedly the profundity and power of this tradition that contained the bewitching energy that springs to life anew in their marvelous works. Today we continue the study and publication of *rāgamālā* genre miniatures from the album (*muraqqa'*) of Karl Fabergé that we began in the preceding issue [1].

Albums of the type under discussion here represent a specific genre that contains the most varied materials. The researcher who studies them must be prepared for unexpected discoveries. In the course of writing this article, for example, reasons emerged to “shift” the dating of the earliest materials some 300 years, from the sixteenth to the thirteenth century. In the view of the Album's compilers, one of the calligraphy examples it contains (*qiṭ'a*) is an autograph by the outstanding Iraqi calligrapher Yāqūt al-Musta'šimī (1221—1298). This can only be confirmed or refuted by a comparative analysis of several samples created by the *qalam* of one of the greatest Muslim calligraphers.

In the preceding article we discussed in detail three folios from the Album that contain miniatures that stem from the *rāgamālā* tradition. We continue this description below [2].

**1. *Kakubha Rāginī*** (7.6 × 11.5 cm) (see front cover of the present issue).

This miniature (fol. 20b) depicts a lone young woman in a plush red dress who stands beneath a tree surrounded by three peacocks. The background consists of bright-yellow hills with a sprinkling of green treetops and yellow-white buildings (one notes a minaret and fragments of a mausoleum or palace complex) and a dark-red sky. The anxious mood evoked by the colours is underscored by the silhouettes of low-flying birds. The margins display a dark-blue background with large flowers in delicate gold. According to Mark Zebrowski, “after 1750 the bold eroticism of such paintings as *Kakubha Rāginī* changes. Figures

become delicately sinuous; a taste for lighter, more thinly applied colour replaces the dark palette” [3]. The seductive female figure in our miniature confirms this observation, but the palette remains mostly dark. Deccan, second half of the 18th century [4].

The miniature rests in a complex yellow-green border adorned in gold (outer dimensions: 15.5 × 20.4 cm). The middle, and widest, part of the border contains an inscription the meaning of which is unclear at present. It apparently provides descriptions of several “genealogies” (ال) of people, for example: “eaters” (خوردن), “warriors” (سپاهی), “eunuchs (or merchants)” (خواجه), “muezzins” (موذن).

The *qiṭ'a* is written in *nasta'liq* on a yellow background, and the groups of words are separated by areas of gold and coloured pigment decorated with a floral motif. The technique was called *tarsī' wa taḥrīr* in Persia and *abrī* in Ottoman Turkey.

The *rāginī* usually plays on the *rudra vīṇā*, an ancient instrument used in Indian classical music. The instrument is depicted in temple art of the sixth century A.D. There are also references to a bottle-gourd *vīṇā* in texts dated as far back as 500 B.C. This instrument has dominated Indian music for nearly 2000 years [5].

The reverse of the folio (*fig. 1*) contains a calligraphy sample (*qiṭ'a*): five diagonal lines in large-scale *nasta'liq* written into a central rectangle (7.3 × 14.5 cm) in a complex border (outer dimensions: 17.8 × 26.0 cm). The central part of the latter also contains a Persian text in even larger *nasta'liq*. The groups of words, as on the reverse, are enclosed in a thin black line (*tarsī' wa taḥrīr*). The gold background bears a gold ornament of small blue, red and pink flowers identical to that on the reverse side. The margins display a yellow background with large flowers in delicate gold.

The Persian text in the central cartouche contains relatively standard moral-ethical maxims:

هو الرحيم  
ای گشته بدولت وسعادت فروز  
باید که دهی سیم بسایل هر روز  
گر مرد کریم است ز خاکش برکیر  
ور مرد لئیم است دهانش بردوز