
PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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MURAQQA'. ALBUM OF THE INDIAN AND PERSIAN MINIATURES OF THE 16—18TH CENTURIES AND THE MODELS OF THE PERSIAN CALLIGRAPHY OF THE SAME PERIOD

Muraqqa' is an interesting and rare in its repertoire collection of the Indian miniatures of the Mughal school of the 17—early 18th centuries and the Deccan school of the 17th century, as well as of the Persian miniatures of the Isfahan school of the late 16—17th centuries. It also contains the models of Persian calligraphy art.

In spite of the very high value of the wonderful miniatures of the Album — *Muraqqa'* — and the publication of 17 of them, up today its full corps was practically unknown both to the specialists of the Persian and Indian book miniature and to the students of the Persian calligraphy. The following lines represent an attempt to fill the gap.

The Album was made in the accordion (type de concertina) way: only on one side of the sheets there were miniatures or the models of the calligraphy, which were linked by pairs, four paired blocks combined (for example, ff. 14—15, 22—23, 26—27, 32—33). The size of each folio is 22.5 × 36.5 cm, 45 folios in all.

Decoration: after the mounting of the Album on every folio the preliminary marking out was made with the monochrome frame-lines, determining the bordure lines, margins and internal frames, which were to be decorated later. The artist-decorator, evidently, never started his work, as all these sheets remained unfinished except folios 1 and 45 which were decorated by the master-decorator. F. 1a: the margins of the thick glue paper against the green background with the golden ornamental painting (according to the conventional pattern) — stylized lotus and peony (*khatā'i*) flowers with the figures of the birds and phoenix in the upper part of the margins. On the frames of the sheet there is a brown bordure stripe with thin (white and green) lines, while the wide frame of the miniature is monochrome. F. 45: the margins of the thick glue paper of the rose tint with the golden ornamental painting (ac-

ording to the pattern) — spiral of the stylized flowers of peony (*khatā'i*) and lotus. Several models of the calligraphic writing (ff. 23a, 26a, 27a), the miniatures (ff. 17a, 20a, 25a, 34a), decorated with the painted frames in different water-colours and gold ornament, evidently, were once the part of other albums and afterwards, without changing, were mounted in this *Muraqqa'*.

Binding: the size is 22.5 × 36.7 cm. Because of the special way of mounting of *Muraqqa'*, the binding has only two protective covers (without the backside cover and the valve). The binding in papier mache is decorated, on the top cover, with a water-colour painting coated with lacquer. The central field is decorated with floral (roses, tulips, peonies) and plant (large-leaf branches) motifs, surrounded by a fine frame of gilded lines, against a dark red background sprinkled with gold dust. Around its edge is a large band embellished with a garland of flowers (*khatā'i*) on a black background. A fine band similar to the inside frame runs all the way around. The back cover of the binding is made and decorated in the same way. In the center of the cover, on a large leaf, is the signature of the master-decorator — “Made by the very humble Muḥammad Shafi' ibn Muḥammad Masiḥ, 1144 [1731—1732]”. The two inside covers are made in the same way: a monochrome central field (gold colour), framed by a dark gold band decorated with three white lines. It is believed to come from Isfahan or, probably, Mashhad.

There is some problem about the dating of the Album. The binding dates from 1144/1731—1732. It seems to be contemporary with the Album's compilation. However, the existence of the Indian miniatures, made in the second half of the 18th century, shows that the decoration of the Album had not been completed. It was finished about the 60s of the 18th century.

The Masters of the Brush and Qalam

The Indian miniatures of two schools form a little more than a half of the *Muraqqa'* (23 folios from 45): the Mughal school of the late 16—early 18th centuries and the

Deccan school of the first half of the 17th century. The Mughal school is represented with 21 miniatures (ff. 2—5, 7, 12, 13, 19—21, 25, 18, 19, 34, 35, 37—39, 41, 44, 45),