

ANTHOLOGY

DATED 973 (1566)

An anthology of ghazals by Sa'di and others

SUBJECT AND ARRANGEMENT. The manuscript contains a selection of Persian *ghazals* by Sa'di and other poets, for the most part only the first five *bait*s of each poem. An erroneous title added on fol. 1 in the 19th century makes the volume out to be selections from the *Divān* of 'Rāshid'.

MEASUREMENTS, ETC. 18.5 × 12.3 cm.; the written surface measures 9.0 × 4.8 cm.; 2 horizontal, 2 vertical, and 2 oblique lines; 53 folios.

WRITING AND PAPER. The writing is a graceful *Nasta'liq* enclosed within gold and coloured rulings. The polished gold-sprinkled paper is contained within wide margins of thicker polished paper of varying ivory tones.

BINDING. As is not uncommon with manuscripts of the late 16th century, this fine *Sukhtah* binding of black leather, with a flap, is far more ornate within than without. On the outside of the cover is a sunk central panel decorated with cloud scrolls and floral ornament in two tints of gold and surrounded by a panelled border of gold tracery over blue-painted paper and green silk in compartments; the inside is ornamented with centre, corners, and a panelled border of gold tracery over similar blue paper and green silk, the centre panel having a sunk ground decorated with cloud scrolls and floral ornament in two tints of gold, and coloured flowers.

DATE AND SCRIBE. The manuscript was copied by Muḥammad ibn 'Alā' al-Dīn of Riza (near Herat), who has dated it Jumādā II 973 (January 1566).

ILLUMINATION. In the double-page frontispiece of unusual style on foll. 3b-4, each page contains two verses inscribed on a ground decorated with running foliage in gold within a panelled border containing foliage scrolls illuminated in lapis and gold and a little black, and embodying additional decorative elements in the form of painted female heads; on each page are also two corners containing delicately executed plant and animal, and plant and bird forms, respectively; the whole is contained within wide margins embellished with a design of *simurghs* and Chinese cloud forms in lapis, red, grey, and white on a gold ground. The remaining pages, each of which is ornamented with four corner-pieces in colour, are contained within wide margins covered with animal and plant designs in gold.

SEAL AND INSCRIPTION. On fol. 1 is the seal and signature of Sayyid 'Alī Fu'ād, who purchased the book in 1278 (1861-2) and stamped it with his *ex libris*.

[E. B. and A. J. A.]