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BŪSTĀN

CIRCA 1570

A manuscript of Sa'dī's Būstān

MEASUREMENTS, ETC. 32.2 × 21.8 cm.; the written surface measures 15.6 × 8.5 cm.; 2 columns of 11 lines; 183 folios.

WRITING AND PAPER. The writing is a splendid *Nasta'liq*, within elaborate borders. The paper is thinnish, cream, and polished; there is some damage by insects.

BINDING. The binding is in brown leather, with gold tooling.

DATE AND SCRIBE. The colophon on fol. 182*a* ascribing the transcription to Muḥammad Qāsim al-Haravī, with the date 930 (1523), is extremely suspect. The true scribe gives his name on fol. 182*b* as Mīr Ṣāliḥ al-Kātib; the transcription was made towards 1570. A note on the same page records the acquisition of the manuscript by Shāh Muḥammad in 986 (1578). Afterwards the volume passed into the library of Shāh Jahān.

ILLUMINATION AND ILLUSTRATIONS. On fol. 1 is a splendid *shamsah* illuminated in gold, blue, and black. Foll. 1*b* and 2 are sumptuously illuminated as a double title-page in the rather conservative style affected at Bukhara throughout the 16th century. Sub-headings are all fully illuminated in gold and colours; the text is framed in gold interlaced strapwork throughout the volume; and the margins, of different coloured paper, are all most elaborately decorated in gold (and sometimes, where a miniature occurs, in colours) with floral scrolls.

The manuscript contains eleven miniatures, to which four different artists have contributed, three of whom have signed their work. The miniature on fol. 16 is dated 1025 (1616), which may be taken as the approximate date of the others (except fol. 183*b*, which seems to be some fifty years earlier). They are thus of very great interest as examples of the Bukhara style in its latest stage, especially as they are, on the whole, of very high quality. Of the three named artists, Muḥammad Sharīf seems to be the best all-round; Murād comes next, with his genius for caricature; and lastly, Muḥammad Darvīsh, whose work is careful, but rather lifeless.

The subjects are as follows:

Fol. 6. The Ascent (*Mi'rāj*) of the Prophet to Heaven, attended by angels. By Muḥammad Sharīf.

Fol. 16. Enthroned prince interviewing a dervish. By Muḥammad Sharīf. Above the arch is an inscription stating that the work was done for the library of Hazrat Hidāyat b. Mīr Mu'in al-Dīn (b.) Khwājah 'Abd al-Raḥīm (b.) Khwājah Sa'd, with the date 1025 (1616).

Fol. 22. Dismounted prince writing on a rock, attended by courtiers. By Muḥammad Sharīf.