

## TUḤFAT AL-AḤRĀR

DATED 980 (1572)

*A manuscript of Fāmī's Tuḥfat al-Aḥrār*

**MEASUREMENTS, ETC.** 25.0 × 16.7 cm.; the written surface measures 13.0 × 6.8 cm.; 12 lines; 76 folios.

**WRITING AND PAPER.** The writing is a firm *Nasta'liq* between gold, blue, and green rulings enclosing a border filled with floral scroll-work in red and blue. The gold-sprinkled paper is of a deep ivory tone, polished and firm, and relaid throughout within wide margins of thick, semi-polished paper of lighter tone; but it is damaged and worm-eaten.

**BINDING.** The outside of the rough black leather cover, with a flap, has a sunk central medallion with pendants and corners stamped with a floral design in red on gold, and a gilt cord and line border. The inside, which is far more ornate, is ornamented in colour, in emulation of an old lacquer cover, in a pair of paintings of unusual style showing a dog, a lynx, and a hare at the foot of a tree in leaf above which, amid Chinese cloud-scrolls, hovers the Sīmurgh; round each picture is a latticework border of black scrollwork with pink fleurons on a blue ground.

**DATE AND SCRIBE.** As stated in the colophon, the copy was made by Mīr Ḥusain, known as Mīr Kulangī, who perhaps is Mīr Ḥusain al-Ḥusainī, the famous scribe employed at Bukhara, in the 16th century, in the service of the Shaibanid princes,<sup>1</sup> and who, like many calligraphers, was of 'Alid descent. The date, which reads 98, must be meant for 980 (1572).<sup>2</sup>

**ILLUMINATION AND ILLUSTRATIONS.** On foll. 1b-2 is a double-page frontispiece embodying, within gold-outlined cloud forms, the first six verses of the poem, within a border illuminated in lapis, black, and gold, with coloured fleurons and flowers, in a style revealing, as do also the two miniatures, the decadence, after the middle of the 16th century, of Bukhara work founded on the Bihzadian schools of Herat. Some of the margins are covered in floral ornament in gold with occasional colour, some in floral and bird forms, some in stencilled designs, in colour, all but a few being further adorned with five decorative motifs.

The subjects of the two miniatures are as follows:

(1) Fol. 33b. Within a black border containing floral ornament in colour is a picture of the Prophet Yūsuf, with the appropriate nimbus of flame, seated beneath a canopy in a flowering garden against a gold hill and blue sky; kneeling before him in an attitude of adoration is the Jew who has followed him to Egypt to benefit by the favours conferred by Pharaoh; Yūsuf is holding a mirror brought by the Jew from Palestine as a gift.

(2) Fol. 50. Two ducks bearing a tortoise aloft on a stick to which it is clinging by its teeth are flying over a hill on which are an ibex and an antelope; on the bank of a stream in the foreground stand six men, three on either side of a tree.

**SEAL.** On fol. 1b is the seal of one Muḥammad Ḥasan.

[E. B.]