

Persian Manuscripts in McGill University Libraries

ADAM GACEK
MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The collections of Arabic script manuscripts in the libraries of McGill University consist of Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish and a few Urdu texts. In terms of physical form these manuscripts represent codices, calligraphic pieces and fragments. Located in Blacker-Wood Library of Zoology and Ornithology, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, Islamic Studies Library, and Rare Books and Special Collections Division, they have been gradually explored and documented over the last fifty years.¹

All together McGill's collections of Persian language manuscripts contain some 334 volumes (338 individual texts) and 81 fragments containing mostly detached leaves with painted illustrations (miniatures), as well as some drawings and calligraphs. They are distributed between Blacker-Wood Library (199 vols.), Osler Library (68 vols.), Rare Books and Special Collections Division (36 vols. and 81 fragments) and Islamic Studies Library (31 vols.). Most of these manuscripts have been at McGill since 1926. The principal figures connected with the acquisition of these manuscripts were Sir William Osler (1849–1919), Casey A. Wood (1856–1942), Max Meyerhof (1874–1945) and the Russian scholar Wladimir Ivanow (1886–1970). Osler, Wood and Meyerhof had a lot in common; all three were fascinated by ophthalmology.

Most of the manuscripts now housed in the Blacker-Wood and Osler libraries were purchased by Wladimir Ivanow for Casey Wood, who founded in 1920 the library of ornithology at McGill. Casey Wood met Ivanow while on his travels in Kashmir and North Western India and, since one of his pursuits was the acquisition of books for McGill, he used Ivanow's expertise to acquire manuscripts. Ivanow, originally a curator of Persian manuscripts in the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg, settled in Calcutta and worked for the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. This association with the Asiatic Society bore fruit in a four-volume catalogue of the Society's Persian manuscript collection,

¹ For a complete list of publications relevant to these collections see the end of this article.

published between the years 1924 and 1928. The manuscripts collected for McGill by Ivanow come from North Eastern India (Lucknow and Sandila), where most of them had been copied, making them therefore of great interest to paleographers and codicologists.

In terms of subject coverage, these collections embrace all aspects of Islamic literature: Qur'anic exegesis, Tradition, Jurisprudence, Philosophy, Theology, Mysticism, History, Belles Lettres, and Sciences. Well-represented among the latter are: Medicine and the Natural Sciences, including works on hunting, falconry, and farriery. All together there are some 41 manuscripts with one or more illuminated headpieces, double-page frontispieces or some other illuminations and 22 manuscripts that contain painted illustrations (miniatures). Of interest are also six lacquer book covers.

Some 99% of all the codices were not originally foliated and most of them were written on Indian or Persian laid paper. This paper most often features irregular laid lines running horizontally. In a number of cases, however, some chain lines are clearly visible, grouped in twos or in threes. Furthermore, several 19th century manuscripts, most probably of Kashmiri origin, are written on very fine laid paper, with fairly regular and closely spaced laid lines. This paper is traditionally buff- or blue-tinted (see nos. 19/1, 85/2, 88/2, 95/2, 111/6, 325).²

In terms of handwriting, the majority of manuscripts are written in hands that exhibit many features common to *nasta'liq* and *shikastah*. A small number were executed in *naskh* and *Bihārī* scripts. Among the four texts in *Bihārī* script there is a collection of prayers dated 892/1487 (no. 123).

As far as the dating is concerned, most of the manuscripts cite years in A.H. (*hijrī qamarī*) but we also encounter manuscripts dated in A.D. (*'Īsavī*) or according to the reign of the local ruler (*julūsī*), as well as *Vikrama samvat* (or *sanvat*, *sambat*) (*Hindī*, *Hinduṅī*, *Bikramī*) and *faṣlī* eras. The collections span the period from the 9/15th to the 14/20th centuries. Although the largest group of dated manuscripts constitute codices executed in the 12/18th and 13/19th centuries, at least five were copied in the 9/15th and 14 in the 10/16th centuries. Two codices were transcribed in the early 14/20th century and the most recent one dates from 1381/1962. Twenty-two colophons are in Arabic.

² Numbers in round brackets refer to entries in my forthcoming catalogue: *Persian manuscripts in the libraries of McGill University: brief catalogue*.

Individual collections

1. Blacker-Wood Library

As mentioned above, this entire collection was put together by Wladimir Ivanow. It includes items described in his handwritten catalogue, dated Bombay, 1927, as well as later additions (some 30 vols.), most of which have typed and handwritten descriptions made by Ivanow (and later corrected by Casey Wood) in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and dated Calcutta, June 1, 1927.³ A few of these manuscripts were collected in 1928 and one was sent to McGill as late as 1933. In these additional acquisitions there are 20 manuscripts dealing with such subjects as zoology, botany, falconry, fariery and hunting.

Here of special interest is a composite volume (W58) consisting of three works: *Nuz'hat-nāmah-i 'Alāyī* (no. 201), *Risālah-i Kātib al-Baghdādī* (no. 228) and *Farrukh-nāmah-i Jamālī* (no. 64). The *Nuz'hat-nāmah* was executed by 'Alī ibn Maḥmūd, known as the jeweler of Shiraz (al-Šā'igh al-Shīrāzī), in Rab. I 807/1404, which makes it the oldest dated Persian manuscript at McGill. This richly illustrated codex was the subject of two unpublished partial translations of the sections on birds by W. Ivanow and C. N. Seddon in 1928 and 1929 (see nos. 339–342).

Among other manuscripts one should mention: two rare manuscripts by Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Zabardast (nos. 6 and 112) '*Ajā'ib al-ṣadr* on Cosmography and *Khavāṣṣ al-ḥayawān* on the properties of animals; an illuminated and illustrated sixteenth century copy of *Dīvān-i Amīr Khusraw* (no. 43); and a copy of *Dīvān-i Qāsim Anwār* bearing a medallion ex libris of the Timurid ruler Ulugh Beg (reg. 850/1447–853/1449) (no. 45).

2. Osler Library

The Persian manuscripts in the Osler Library are for the most part of Indian provenance and even though some of the items are in poor condition, this collection is very important as it contains a good number of compositions written by Indian physicians or physicians who practiced medicine in India. The collection includes two translations or adaptations from Sanskrit or Hindi (nos. 164, 170, 202, 314), as well

³ The title of Ivanow's handwritten catalogue is: "Annotated catalogue of the Casey A. Wood Collection of Persian, Arabic, and Hindustani manuscripts".

as translations of Galen's work on urine (*Kitāb al-bawl*) and al-Rāzī's *Bur' al-sā'ah*.⁴

They number some 80 individual compositions contained in 71 volumes, and cover such subjects as materia medica or simple drugs (*mufradāt*), pharmacopœias (*qarābādīn*), treatment (therapy) (*‘ilāj*, *mu‘ālahah*), drugs (*advīyah*), diseases (*amrāz*), prescriptions (*mujarrabāt*), prophylaxis (*ḥifz-i ṣiḥḥat*), diet (*ma'kūl va mashrūb*), anatomy (*tashrīḥ*), ophthalmology (*‘ilm-i kaḥḥālī*), and surgery (*‘ilm-i jarrāḥī*). Some individual compositions deal with such matters as the examination of urine (*bawl*, *qārūrah*, *tafsīrah*), pulse (*nabz*) and stool (*bīrāz*), as well as the treatment of fever (*tap*, *ḥummá*), measles (*ḥaṣbah*), blisters (*ābilah*) and scab (*jarab*). Among the best represented writers are Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad Haravī Khurāsānī, known as Yūsufī (d. 950/1543–4) and Muḥammad Akbar ibn Muḥammad Muqīm Arzānī (d. 1134/1722).

Yūsufī's works include: *Dalā'il al-bawl*, *Dalā'il al-nabz*, *Favā'id al-akhḡār*, *Jāmi' al-favā'id*, *Qaṣīdah dar ḥifz-i ṣiḥḥat* and *Sittah-i ḡarūrīyah*. These writings deal with urine, pulse, therapeutics and health preservation.

Arzānī, on the other hand, is represented by *Tibb al-Akbar*—an amplified translation of *Sharḥ al-asbāb wa-al-‘ālāmāt* by Nafīs al-Kirmānī (d. 853/1449), and its abridgement, entitled *Khayr al-tajārib*; *Qarābādīn-i Qādirī*, an elaborate work on compound medicaments; *Mufarriḥ al-qulūb*, a Persian commentary on the *Qānūnchah* or *Little Canon*, and *Mīzān al-ṭibb*, a work of medicine for beginners.

Among the more interesting codices is a composite volume with three compositions, the first one being a copy of *‘Ayn al-davā* (no. 17, on the diseases of the eye) by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Kaḥḥāl, known as Bāvard, dated 1102/1690. Nothing so far is known about this author. This is the earliest dated copy in the collation and appears to be a *unicum*. The other two works, possibly by the same author, but lacking their *incipits*, deal with the diseases of the head, as well as with fevers and poisons.

The Persian work on anatomy by Maṣṣūr ibn Yūsuf ibn Ilyās (d. after 826/1422), *Tashrīḥ-i badan* (*Tashrīḥ-i Maṣṣūrī*), is represented here

⁴ Medical manuscripts in the Osler Library have been briefly described in my recently published article: "Arabic and Persian medical manuscripts in the Osler Library, McGill University". *Nāmāh-i Anjuman*, 3, no. 2 (2003): 143–184.

in two copies, which contain twelve and five diagrammatic manikins respectively. There are three illuminated manuscripts with headpieces, of which the most outstanding example is *Tuḥfat al-mu'minīn* (no. 328/2), an Indian pharmacopoeia by Muḥammad Mu'min Tunkābunī Daylamī (fl. 11th/17th cent.) copied in Bharatpūr by Qiyām al-Dīn of (*sākin*) Akbarābād in 1175/1765. This copy has an unusual illuminated headpiece containing some architectural features surrounded by palm trees. In addition, there are three copies of *Ikhtiyārāt-i Bad'ī* (*materia medica*) by Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī al-Anṣārī, known as Ḥajī Zayn al-'Aṭṭār (d. 806/1403-4).

Additionally, of special interest here are compositions by Dr. Jakob Eduard Polak (Ḥakīm Pūlāk Namsavī), an Austrian physician, who practiced medicine at the court of Shāh Nāṣir al-Dīn Qājār between 1851 and 1860, and by Dr. Johann L. Schlimmer (Ḥakīm Shalīm Flammankī), a Dutchman. Both Polak and Schlimmer taught at the Dār al-Funūn College in Tehran. The Osler collection includes Polak's *Risālah dar bayān-i 'ilm-i jarrāḥī* and two copies of Schlimmer's *Jalā' al-'uyūn*. To Schlimmer are also attributed two other compositions: *Miftāḥ al-khavāṣṣ* and *Qavā'id al-amrāz*.

3. Islamic Studies Library

Islamic Studies Library houses a small collection of 31 volumes. Most of these manuscripts were purchased in the 1960s and 1970s from Iranian and Indian booksellers or were received as donations. Of special interest are: a copy of *Dīvān-i Sa'dī* (no. 46/1) executed by Durr Allāh Kashmīrī in 1097/1686 containing 10 elegantly illuminated pages; Khvānd Amīr's *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (no. 74) copied by Abū al-Ḥamd ibn Naṣīr al-Dīn Yaḥyá Liyāsānī in 1035/1626; and an illustrated Kashmiri copy of *Haft paykar* by Nizāmī (no.111/6), with seven painted illustrations.

4. Rare Books and Special Collections Division

As mentioned above the Persian collections of this library consist of 36 codices and 81 fragments (leaves). The majority of the detached leaves come from various manuscripts of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* and the *Khamsah* of Nizāmī, while most of the 36 codices consist of well known poetical and prose works.⁵ Quite a few of the miniatures were

⁵ Most of the leaves with miniatures are listed in an unpublished work entitled "Persian miniatures" by Glen Lowry, which contains descriptions of 52 single miniature paintings and five illustrated codices.

acquired from H. Khan Monif Gallery of New York City and a good number of them were donated by F. Cleveland Morgan or purchased with the funds provided by Lady Roddick. Among the codices in this collection there are six well executed copies of *Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ* (no. 39) and four manuscripts containing the poetry of Nizāmī, including two copies of his *Khamsah*, calligraphed by ‘Alī al-Kātib in 886/1481 and 904/1499 respectively (nos. 111/1, 111/4). Among other manuscripts of note are: an elegant copy of *Mihr va mushtarī* by Muḥammad ‘Aṣṣār Tabrīzī (no. 161) executed in Qandahār in 982/1574, an illustrated copy of Jāmī’s *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā* (no. 334/1) calligraphed in 980/1573 by ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ibn Nuṣmān al-Munshī al-Jīlānī, an illuminated copy of Rūmī’s *Masnavī-i maṣnavī* (no. 154/3) executed in 1248/1833 by Ibn Muḥammad Taqī Ḥabīb Allāh for the Qajar vizier Muḥammad ‘Alī Khān, and in addition a 16th century copy of Farāhī’s *Ma‘ārij al-nubūwah* (no. 133) calligraphed by Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Kātib.

Publications on Arabic script manuscripts in McGill collections

- Gacek, Adam. “Arabic calligraphy and the ‘Herbal’ of al-Ghāfiqī: a survey of Arabic manuscripts at McGill University”. *Fontanus, from the collections of McGill University*, 2 (1989): 37–53.
- . “The diploma of the Egyptian calligrapher Ḥasan al-Rushdī.” *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 4 (1989): 44–55 (RBD MS AC 156).
- . “Early Qur’anic fragments”. *Fontanus*, 3 (1990): 45–64.
- . “A collection of Qur’anic codices”. *Fontanus*, 4 (1991): 35–53.
- . *Arabic manuscripts in the libraries of McGill University: union catalogue*. Montreal, 1991.
- . and Yayıoğlu, Ali. “Ottoman-Turkish manuscripts in the Islamic Studies Library and other libraries of McGill University”. *Fontanus*, 10 (1998): 41–63.
- . “A Yemeni codex from the library of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥaymī (d. 1140/1727)”. *Essays in honour of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid* (= *Maqālāt wa-dirāsāt muḥdah ilā al-Duktūr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid*). London, al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2002: 643–657.
- . “Arabic and Persian medical manuscripts in the Osler Library, McGill University”. *Nāmah-i Anjuman*, 3, no. 2 (2003): 143–184.

[Ivanow, Wladimir.] “List of Oriental manuscripts, lithographed, and printed medical books presented in 1927 by Dr. Casey A. Wood”. *Bibliotheca Osleriana: a catalogue of books illustrating the history of medicine and science collected, arranged and annotated by Sir William Osler, BT. and bequeathed to McGill University*. Montreal/London, 1969: 701–3.

Treasures of Islam. Art and design in Islamic manuscripts (= *Trésors de l’islam = Kunūz al-Islām*). CD-ROM. Montreal, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies. McGill University, 1999. [Text edited by A. Gacek.]

Watson, W. J. “The C. A. Wood collection of Oriental manuscripts”. *A dictionary catalogue of the Blacker-Wood Library of Zoology and Ornithology*. Boston, 1966: 681–4.

Illustrations

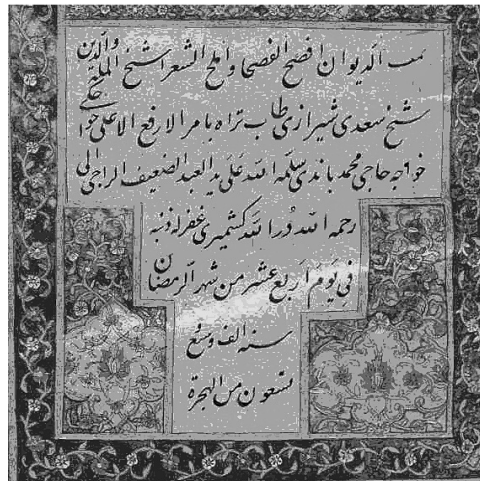


Fig. 1. *Dīwān-i Saʿdī*
(Islamic Studies Library; fragment showing the colophon)

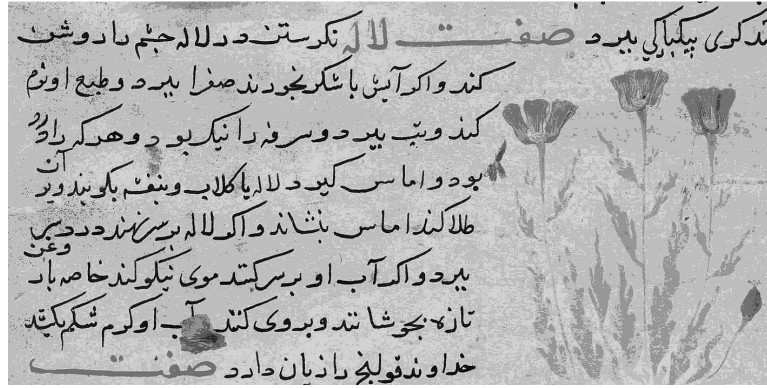


Fig. 2. *Farrūkh-nāmah-i Jamālī*
 (Blacker-Wood Library; fragment of f. 106b depicting tulips)



Fig. 3. *Tuhfat al-mu'minin*
 (Osler Library; fragment of the illuminated incipit page)

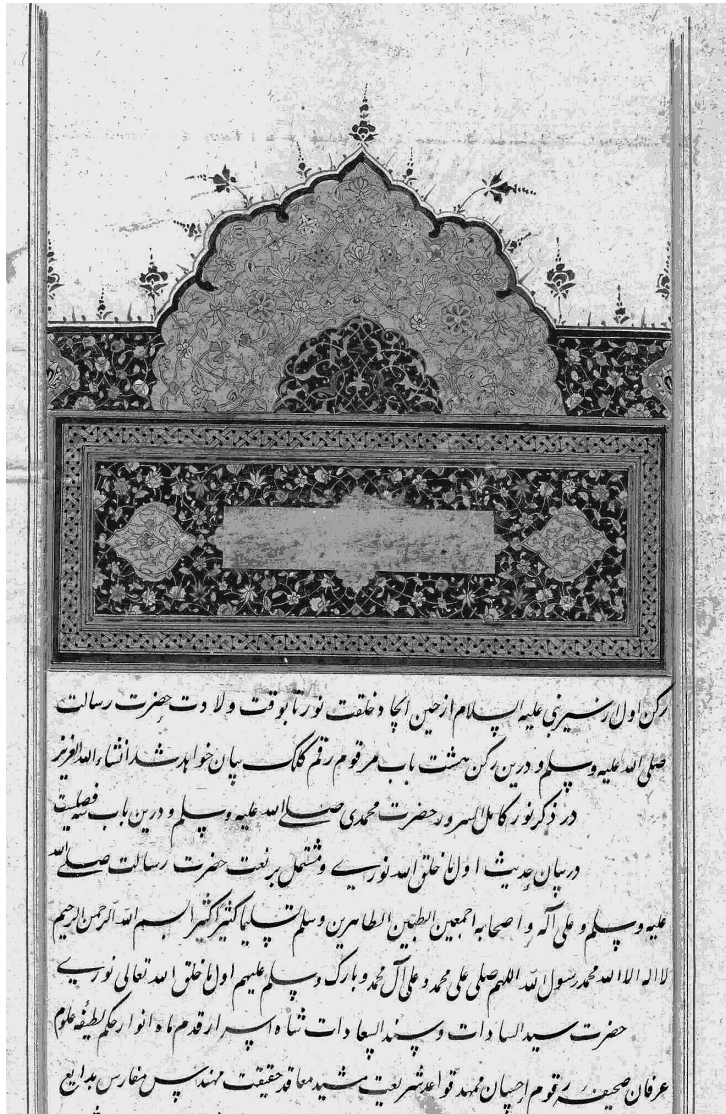


Fig. 4. *Ma'ārij al-nubūwah*
(Rare Books and Special Collections Division;
fragment of the illuminated incipit page)