



# The Collection of Persian Manuscripts of NUL “St. Clement of Ohrid” – Skopje: Overview and Cataloguing Issues

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# NUL “St. Clement of Ohrid” Skopje

- founded on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1944
- inherited the premises of the Central library of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje and its holdings (approximately 150.000 items)
- flood in 1962
- earthquake on 26 July 1963 destroyed almost 80 percent of the city of Skopje, including the library building
- The Library’s holdings stored in Daut Pasha Hamam during 1963-1964
- In 1964, the Library moved to a prefabricated building where it remained until the new library building was erected in 1972

Since 1972 to date





# Collecting of the Oriental mss in RN Macedonia

- Initiated by the Institute of the National History in 1948
- In 1951 the task was taken over by the newly founded institution: the State Archives. In the following ten to fifteen years the Archives actively worked on collecting and preservation of the Oriental manuscripts. In cooperation with the Directorate of Religious Endowments, the greatest part of them was taken over in a really bad condition from the Muslim religious and former educational institutions of which the Directorate was in charge, thus saving them from further deterioration. Other institutions (historical archives in Ohrid and Štip, Museum in Bitola) later joined to the efforts of collecting manuscripts as the first step towards their preservation, some of them ceded them to the Archives.

# Oriental collection of NUL SCO

- Formed in 1966
- Since then, the collecting, preserving, safeguarding and cataloguing of the Oriental mss became one of the duties of the NUL SCO
- In 1969, the Library and the Archives exchanged certain types of materials in accordance to their legal jurisdictions, with Archives ceding to the Library more than 3000 mss and over 5000 printed books which represent the core of the Library's Oriental collection
- The Library collected some 800 manuscripts
- More than 3800 manuscripts (12<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> c.) in Arabic (2662), Ottoman Turkish (1106) and Persian (118) languages

# Cataloguing of the Persian mss in the Archives

- till 1969
- hand-written descriptions for 69 mss made by Fetah Ishak
- shelf mark, title, author with his short biography, bibliography, scribe, place and date of copying, incipit and explicit, color of paper, color of ink, type of script, number of pages, number of lines and their length, presence of marginal notes, decorations, binding, dimensions of page and inventory number

# Cataloguing of Persian mss in NUL SCO

1970s – initial steps towards the joint preparation the printed catalogue of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian mss by Archives and Library – plan remained unrealized

2006 - hand list of the Persian mss made on the basis of Fetah Ishak's descriptions, including title, author, scribe, date and place of copying, and subject

2019 – additional 51 Persian mss identified and added to the hand list as the first step towards the preparation of the printed catalogue

The template for a detailed description of the manuscripts was prepared, inspired by the Catalogue of the Persian manuscripts of the Royal library in Copenhagen prepared by Irmeli Perho, with modification of a number of parameters and additions of the new ones

# Details of description

- Title (original, transliteration)
- Author (original, transliteration)
- Short note on work/author
- Bibliography
- Scribe (original, transliteration)
- Date and place of copying (Hijri, Gregorian)
- Number of pages, number of lines
- Dimensions of leaves and of text area in cm
- Description of:
  - Binding (material, ornaments, condition/state of damage)
  - Paper (European/Oriental; color; condition/state of damage; traces of mechanical restorations)
  - Script
  - Ink
  - Ornaments (decorative headings; frames, painted ornaments, illustrations)



- Notes:

On the title (the title of the original work if translation; in which form and where it is found in the manuscript, or how it is established if not found in it).

On the author (in which form and where it is found in the manuscript or how it is established if not found in it).

On this specific copy of the work (if different from the information mentioned in the resume, as number of chapters, etc.; autograph; copied for; compared and corrected according to the original or to other copy of the work).

On completeness (missing incipit and/or explicit, lacunas).

On marking the pages'/leaves' order (catchmarks, pagination, foliation, unnumbered leaves, mistakes made in pagination/foliation, inserted leaves with notes, empty leaves)

On contents: (presence of pages relating to the contents of the manuscript, presence of other texts such as prayers, quotations from other works etc.)

- Incipit / Begins with
- Explicit / Ends with
- Colophon
- History of the ms: Previous owners, i.e. ownership notes, with the formulation used for the purpose in brackets, in the Arabic script; readers; licenced transmitters or lecturers of the work; *wāqifs*; stamps; old shelf-marks and inventory numbers; names found in the manuscript. Chronologically quoted
- Provenance: Type of acquisition (exchange, gift or purchase), name of person or institution, year of acquisition

- 118 Persian mss containing 152 titles, out of which two are in Arabic and one in Ottoman Turkish language

# Indexes

- Titles – in original, in transliteration and according to the subject
- Authors
- Scribes
- Previous owners and other personal names
- Geographical localities and institutions
- Dated manuscripts
- Decorated manuscripts
- Described manuscripts



# The index of titles according to the subject

1. Quran
2. Prophetic Tradition
3. Dogma
4. Prayers
5. Islamic Jurisprudence
6. Ethics
7. Sufism
  - Anecdotes, legends
  - Bektashism
  - Biographies
  - Hurufism
  - Safawism
8. Philology
9. Astronomy and Astrology
10. Literature
  - Adab and didactical literature
  - Enigmas
  - Correspondence
  - Poetry
  - Proverbs

# **Index of decorated manuscripts**

- a) simple decorative heading excluding gold
- b) multicolored decorative heading including gold
- c) decorative heading exclusively in gold
- d) multicolored decorative heading including gold, in combination with vignettes and/or other types of ornaments
- e) illustrations with the decorative background
- f) illustrations (tables, diagrams)
- g) decorated bindings

# Multicolored decorative heading including gold

## MSP II 33: دیوان حافظ, dated 1522





# Multicolored decorative heading including gold, in combination with vignettes MSP II 6: کلیات سعدي, dated 1556





# Illustrations with a decorative background

MSP I 15-2 : سیفی عروضی بخاری / الرسالة في العروض , dated 1554

The image displays an open manuscript with two pages of handwritten Persian text in a cursive script. The text is framed by decorative borders. On the right page, there is a circular diagram illustrating the concept of 'فَاعِلَان' (Fā'ān), which is a specific type of poetic meter. The diagram is a circle divided into several segments, with the word 'فَاعِلَان' written in the center. The segments contain various words and symbols, including 'عَبْدَان', 'عَبْدَانِ', 'عَبْدَانِ', 'عَبْدَانِ', and 'عَبْدَانِ'. The diagram is surrounded by a decorative border with floral and geometric patterns. Below the diagram, there is a small block of text in Persian, which appears to be a commentary or explanation related to the diagram. The overall presentation is highly decorative and characteristic of classical Persian manuscripts.

# Main difficulties

- numerous fragmentary manuscripts with no incipits and/or explicits, often damaged and/or difficult to read (related to the Collection's history)
- manuscripts where neither author or title are mentioned

# Solutions

- googling of a section of the text of fragmentary manuscripts
  - Works by Sa'di, Sana'i, Jami and, 'Urfi identified, in the first place, thanks to the **Nosokhan** (Digital Library of Iranian Poetry and Literature), *URL: <http://www.nosokhan.com/>* and **Ganjoor** (database of the biographies of the Persian poets and their works), *URL: <https://ganjoor.net/>*



# رسالة در علم هیئة / القوشجي: MSP II 43



al-Qushji was identified as the author of this treatise on astronomy, thanks to the Qatar Digital Library, by simple googling of the manuscript incipit [https://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc\\_100044787805.0x000012](https://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100044787805.0x000012)



# Mss which could not be properly identified

As title of the work used:

- several words from the beginning
- the title of the first chapter
- a generic title

# Additional difficulty

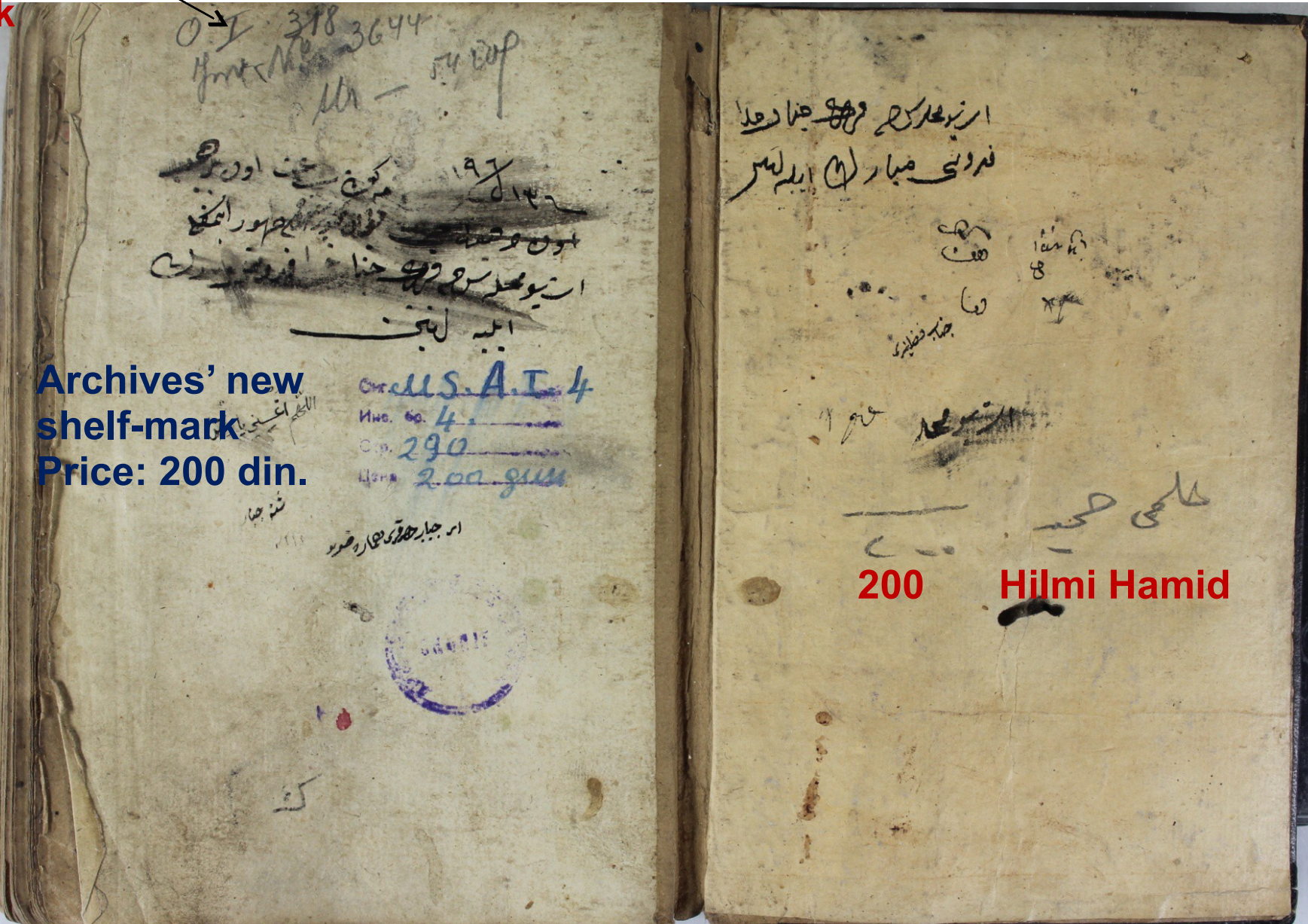
- establishing the history of the manuscripts and their provenance
  - the inventory books for the materials in the Arabic script kept by the Library often do not include the necessary information while the ones kept by the Archives for the manuscripts handed over to the Library in 1969 are yet to be located and studied
  - the manuscripts themselves have often been the main source of this type of information

- Numerous manuscripts which had been ceded to the Library by the Archives contain notes generally written in pencil, in Arabic script, consisting mostly of personal names and numbers (obviously prices), occasionally including additional details such as the language of the manuscript, the name of the author and the title. They had been obviously written down by the archivists who were in charge of the Oriental manuscripts in the fifties of the last century, who, as it seems, continued to use the Ottoman Turkish some 20 years after it had been replaced by the modern Latin-based alphabet.



# گلستان سعي: MSP I 4

Archives' old shelf-mark



Archives' new shelf-mark  
Price: 200 din.

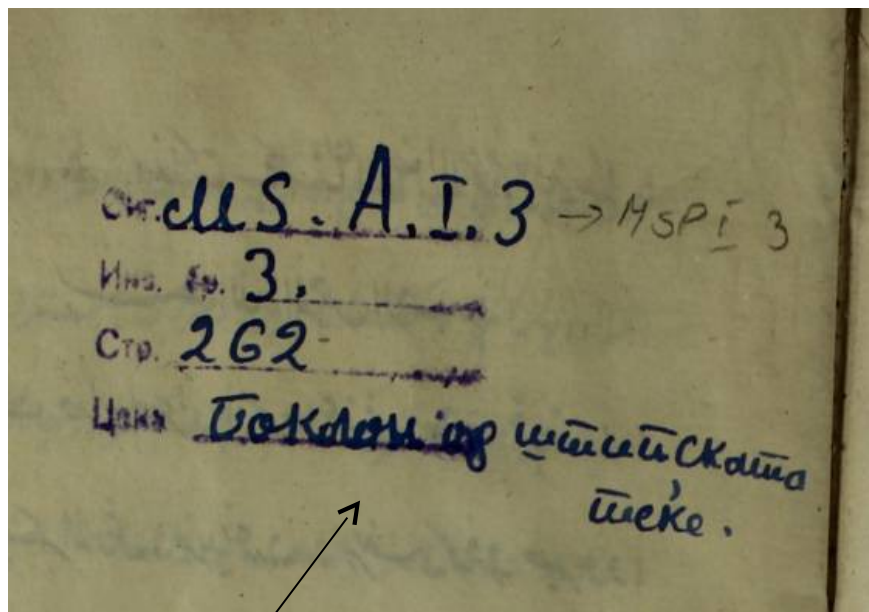
200 Hilmi Hamid



# مستان سعدي: MSP I 3

Archives' old shelf-mark

Archives' new shelf-mark



“Price: gift from the tekke of Štip“  
(in Macedonian)



“Ištíp tekese hediyе“ (i.e., gift from the tekke of Štip, in Ottoman Turkish)

# Top-list of popularity

Title / author	Number of copies
گلستان / سعدي	16
• شرح گلستان / البروسوي	2
• شرح گلستان / سروري	1
پند نامه / فرید الدين عطار	14
بستان / سعدي	11
ديوان / حافظ	8
حديث أربعين	3
معميات / مير حسين	3
شرح ديوان علي / قاضي مير	3

Title / author	Number of copies
رسالة عروض / جامي	2
نان وحلوا / بهاء الدين العاملي	2
المثنوي المعنوي / جلال الدين الرومي	2
• شرح المثنوي المعنوي / سروري	2
• جزيرة المثنوي / سينا چاك يوسف	1
بهارستان / جامي	2
ديوان / كاتبي	2
تحفة شاهدي	2 + 20 copies among Turkish mss

# Ownership notes

- In addition to the number of copies found in the Collection, ownership notes and/or stamps also give testimony to the popularity of certain works



## OMSP II 62

شرح گلستان / البروسي

copied in 936 / 1529-1530

4 (تملكه الفقير حمد سعد الله؟ [؟...؟] زاده  
القاضي بدمشق الشام سنة ١٧٨

1764-1765 CE

1 (اشترت هذا الكتاب من مخلفات حسن  
افندي كوق بمقابلة ست دراهم

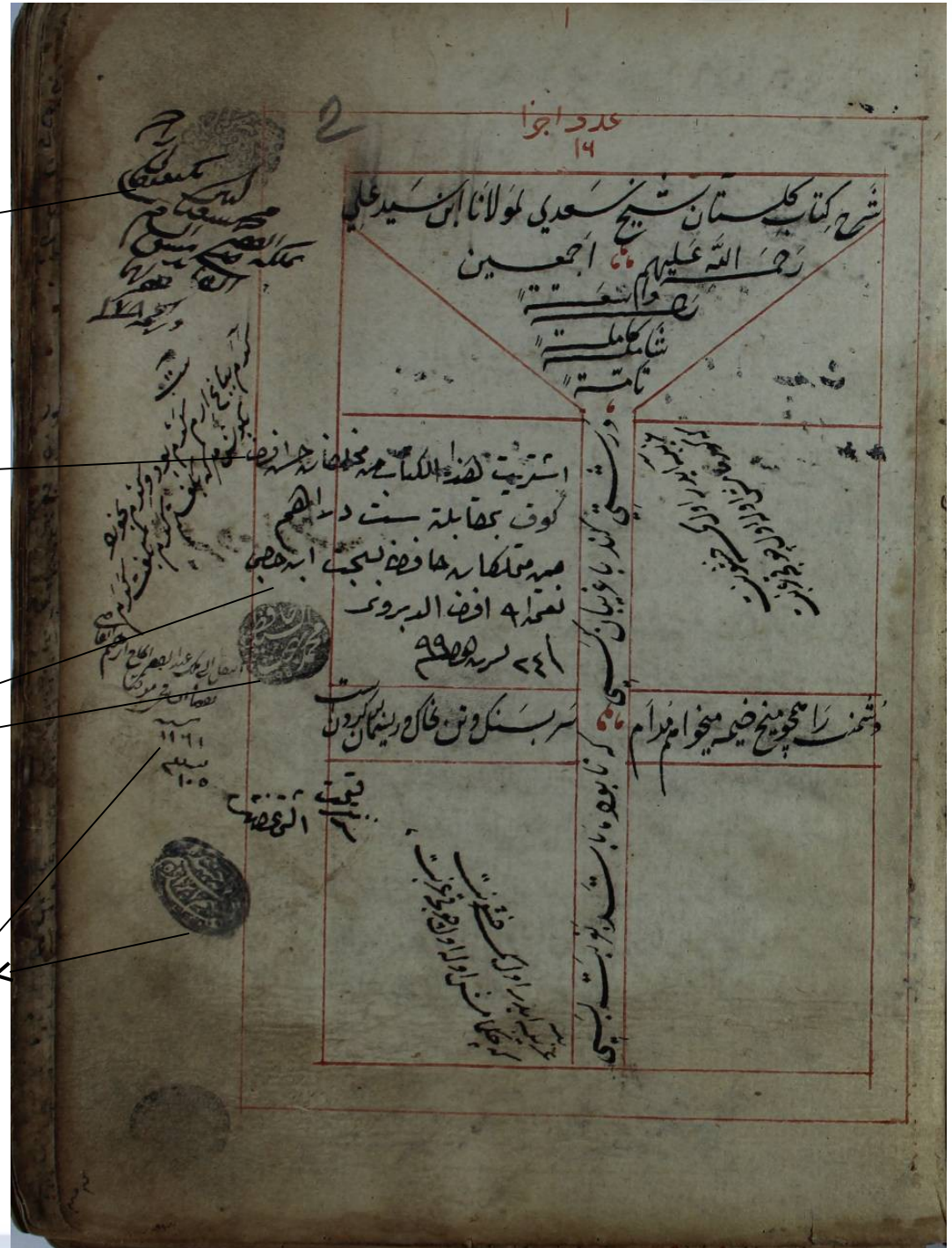
Prior to 1587 CE

2 (بين ممتلكات حافظ بهجت ابن حجي  
تعمت اله افندي الدبروي ٢٤ تشرين اول  
سنة ٩٩٥

1587 CE

3 (انتقل الى ملك الحاج ابراهيم القاضي  
سنة ١١٦١

1748-1749 CE

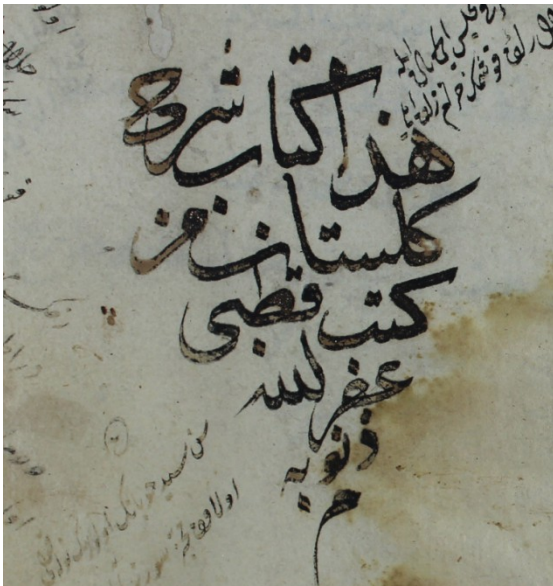




## OMSP II 62

### شرح گلستان / البروسوي

Fol. 148a



(5) هذا كتاب شرح

گلستان من

کتب قطبي

عمر الله

ذنوبه

م

The manuscript had  
changed hands at least  
five times

## Date and place of copying

- According to the scribal colophons, the dated Persian manuscripts of the Collection were copied between 1454 and 1889, in different locations which today are in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia

# OMSP II 65: colophon

[On ethics and nice behaviour]

تم الكتاب بعون الملك الوهاب  
في تاسع شعبان المعظم سنة  
ثمان وخمسين وثمانمائه  
الفية اتمه على اجنبدي  
اخراساني ببلد  
تبريز  
م

Copied in Tabriz (Iran) in 858 AH/1454 CE by Ali al-Junaydi al-Khurasani



# Subjects

- Mainly poetry, very popular in different sufi orders (scribes occasionally mention their status of dervish or their affiliation to a certain sufi order, such as naqshbandi or mawlawi)
- Prosody, sufi literature, dictionaries, hagiographies, prayers, collections of 40 Prophetic traditions, works on *hurufi* dogma which consists of complicated numerological interpretations of the letters of the Arabic alphabet which has been especially cherished by the Bektashi order

## Most important manuscript MSP II 38: مثنوي معنوي / جلال الدين الرومي

Undated, terminus ante quem 1090/1679-1680 (the year written on the endpaper). Oriental paper. Copied by a certain عبد الله from “the divided, corrected, refined and revised copy, copied from the original one, divided, corrected, refined and revised in front of its author and his khalifa”,

كان استنساخها من النسخة المفارقة المصححة المذهبة المنقحة التي كان استنساخها من النسخة الأصلية المفارقة المصححة المذهبة المنقحة على حضرت الشيخ مؤلفه وحضور خليفته قدسنا الله بسرهم العزيز وما ذلك i.e., in front of على العزيز بعزير وقوبلت من اولها الى آخرها al-Rumi and his son Sultan Walad.

Includes 45 verses by Sultan Walad, quotations of al-Rumi's words (از کلام حضرت خداوندگار قدس الله سره العزیز) and excerpts from his manuscripts (ومن خطه المبارك قدس) (سره / وجد بخطه manuscript



# How to understand it?

**On one hand:**

3) **Abdallah's ms**



2) Ms from which  
Abdallah made his copy



1) “original copy” – ms of **al-Rumi's** time

It points to the quality of Abdallah's copy and possibility that it was created near al-Rumi's time, although it is not possible to know how much time elapsed between copy 1 and copy 3

**On the other hand:**

- quotations of al-Rumi's words (از کلام حضرت خداوندگار قدس الله سره العزيز ومن خطه المبارك) (قدس سره / وجد بخطه), written by Abdallah's hand
- Possibility: Abdallah one of al-Rumi's students?

Datable to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> or the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century?

**Kavčić, Marijana**

***Catalogue of the Persian manuscripts***

**Skopje: National and University library “St. Clement of Ohrid”, 2020**

- first printed catalogue of the Oriental manuscripts of the Library (in Macedonian language, with *Introduction* in English as well)
- affirmation of this important part of the cultural heritage of North Macedonia
- accessibility to researchers and scholars
- hopefully helpful and useful tools for beginners

**Thank you for your time!**

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