

SCRIPTS, PAGE SETTINGS AND BINDINGS OF MIDDLE-EASTERN MANUSCRIPTS

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INSCRIPTIONS ON THE COVERS OF ISLAMIC MANUSCRIPTS: AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY

Inscriptions (*ketāba* or *katība*) on the outer and inner covers of Persian, Arabic and Turkish manuscripts are an attempt at adorning the bindings as well creating the air of grandeur and flaunting the peak of art reached in the embellishments. Inscriptions for book covers were therefore done scarcely and exclusively for lavishly decorated covers. It was certainly aimed at producing covers of higher artistic level. As a rule, inscriptions appeared of course on the covers of books with texts, which were either very important or famous such as the Holy Qur'ān, the *Šāhnāma* of Firdawsī, *Mathnawī* of Rūmī, *Kulliyāt* of Sa'dī or the *Dīwān* of Ḥāfīz, which also had the merit of being convenient presents to the patrons. A manuscript would deserve to receive elaborate inscriptions on its binding because of its calligraphic hand, illuminations and miniatures.

It was both hard and expensive to inscribe texts on book covers. The binder had to have the text of the inscription written by a calligrapher according to the size and the place available. The calligraphic pieces were then given to the engraver who carved them on metal plates [1]. These stamps were obviously produced for the covers of a single specified manuscript. The procedure was first used for leather bindings, but from the 11th/17th century onwards, as lacquer bindings became widespread, inscriptions on book covers became easier to produce; in this case, the binders used to ask calligraphers to write the inscriptions. If the formers were not also painters and illuminators, they would order the decorations to a master capable of observing the harmony, symmetry and other artistic proportion in respect with other ornaments.

All this explains why the number of inscribed book covers is limited. If I am not far wrong in my guess, it is probable that the number of those, which are catalogued, does not exceed thousand instances. I have myself examined about 200 inscribed bindings for this study.

Unfortunately, cataloguers did not always specify the characteristics of the inscribed covers and they did not describe them all. It is therefore vital that cataloguers and cu-

rators of libraries and collections should gradually develop separate catalogues of this specific material. I have suggested to the authorities of the librarianship departments of Iranian universities to urge students to write dissertations on this subject in the hope that it could a first step towards appropriate studies and catalogues of the inscribed bindings preserved in Iranian libraries and collections.

Among the many scholars who have been working on the history of Islamic bindings since the time of Paul Adam [2], one can mention the name of E. Gratzl who wrote a few lines on inscribed book covers [3], dealing with their general appearance. Later, G. Bosch and his colleagues described some inscribed book covers in the Oriental Institute of Chicago University [4] and D. Haldane published some bindings kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum [5].

The study of the codicological aspects of these inscriptions, of their place and their compositions are of manifold cultural importance. A first point is their artistic and decorative aspects, which remind us of the rendering of the same motifs and compositions on Persian carpets and wares: one could find interesting parallels with the inscriptions on metalwares [6]. These were not the only source of inspiration for the binders who in most cases took up the compositions, decorations and inscribed texts used by the illuminators in the rosettes (*šamsa*), medallions (*turanj*), frontispieces (*sarlawḥ*), and two-double-page frontispieces (*čahār lawḥ*) in order to produce a luxurious inscribed book cover.

Creating a binding with inscriptions was regarded as an ultimate stage of artistic perfection, with no less value than producing drawings and paintings. This is why in the 9th/18th century Šaraf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, in a piece of verse written for the cover of a luxurious manuscript of Firdawsī's *Šāhnāma*, speaks on behalf of the book cover:

اگر چند هستم چو خرم بهار / مشو قانع از من به نقش و نگار

Though I am the same as the flourishing fresh spring time /
Do not be contented with me to my designs and decorations.

He meant that his poems for the cover inscription had lent a new air to it.

The matters represented in the inscriptions on a binding were probably based on the arrangement of the first folio(s) of the manuscript, usually inside *šamsas* and / or *turanjs* which are found on the recto side or on a double frontispiece. The contents included the title of the book, the name of the author or that of the owner, the treasury of a king or prince, etc. Inscriptions are sometimes so mixed with arabesque ornamentation that it is extremely hard to read or distinguish the script. This complexity does not throw the script to the eyes of the viewer; in other words, the decorative aspect of the inscription overshadows its informative side.

The second point deserving to be examined is that of the geographical distribution of this kind of binding within the Islamic world. In which regions book covers with inscriptions were commonly found? What kind of cultural connection was involved?

The information of cover inscriptions

Cover inscriptions provide some useful and interesting pieces of information, which will be listed here.

1. Artistic evaluation of the book cover

Inscriptions on outer and / or inner covers were not restricted to decorative aspects. Sometimes the binder extolled his art. For instance, two *rubā'is* (couplets) have been written for the cover of a copy of Iḥtiyār's *Munšē'āt*; their meaning is primarily related with the cover rather than with the text itself.

این جلد که از جنت عدنش خیرست / مرآت جهان نمای اهل نظرست
گر بگشایی او را جلای بصرست / و بر بسته بود معدن در و گهرست

This cover that is a piece of the Garden of Eden /
It is the magic mirror of Cosmorama for the clear-sighted //
If you open it, it is [cause of] the lustre of the eyes /
[And] if you close it, it is the deposit of pearls and jewels.

این جلد چو خط خوبریان طراز / آراسته پیکری است بیننده نواز
یا خود در جنت است کز عالم فیض / بر ناظر این کتاب می گردد باز

This cover is like the visage of the beauties of Taraz [7] /
[and] it is an adorned figure, soothing the eyes of beholders //
Or it is the door of the paradise which is opened from the universe of grace and blessing to the observer of this book.

Stressing the importance of a binder's work through the exaltation of a cover is found on an excellent leather binding made in Qazvīn during the 9th/5th century for a *Ḥamsa* of Amīr Ḥusraw Dihlavī from the Vever Collection, now in the Arthur Sackler Gallery. There are five *rubā'is* on various parts of its back cover expressing with more vigour than the former example the importance and beauty of the covers; three of these can be quoted here:

این جلد که مایه فتوح آمده است / از بوی نسیم با صیوح آمده است
هر آهوی او چو آهوی مشکین است / هر مرغی ازو جو مرغ روح آمده است

This cover that is the source of grace /
Is the remainder of morning draught in nature //
Each of its deer is like a musk deer /
Each of its birds is like the Bird of Soul.

The third point, which should be investigated, is the functional relationship between the cover inscriptions and the text of the manuscript itself.

The material used for inscribed covers is usually either (i) stamped or tooled leather or (ii) lacquer. As far as we can judge from the evidence presently available, inscriptions on leather appear in the early 8th/14th century. The dating of leather bindings of the period relies mostly on external clues such as the covers themselves and the date of the manuscript — if we can confidently state that the covers are contemporary with the date of the copy. The case of inscribed lacquer covers is different: many of them bear the date of production, an innovation that became fashionable among bookbinders because providing inscriptions for lacquer covers was easier. It must however be remembered that the date is often that of the copy rather than of the covers themselves.

The deer and birds refer to the actual figures on the book cover.

این جلد نقش که به خوبی بکتاست / با او سخن از صورت چین عین خطاست
چون خلعت زرکار بتان بی کم و کاست / بر قامت شاهد سخن آمد راست

This cover is unique in its beauty /
It is a manifest error to compare it with the painting from China //
It is exactly befitted to the stature of the beloved of speech just the same as the comely gold clothes of idols.

این جلد که صد گونه سرورست درو / همچون مه و خور صفا و نورست درو
ابیات لطیفش آن که بیند گوید / یک حلم و صد هزار حوراست درو

This cover which is abundant with many kinds of pleasure /
Is serene, scenic and lit like the sun and moon //
Those who see its fine lines of verses will comment that /
It is a nuptial room with ten thousand houris from paradise.

Another Persian leather binding of the same century in the Vever collection contains the following distich in two panels:

این نسخه که هست باغ رضوان دگر / باشد خط او سنبل و ریحان دگر

This manuscript that is a paradise of another kind /
Its handwriting is [like] flowers and herbs of other kinds.

It was common to compare the covers with the paradise (*rizvān*, *firdaws*) since they included many colourful plants, birds and animals. Šaraf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī wrote a poem for a now lost book cover, incorporating the date of its completion as a chronogram:

گفت در تاریخ آن فردوسی سلام

[He] said as the date of [making] this paradise, O Firdawsī,
peace be upon thee.

Firdawsī salām is a chronogram the value of which is 841 (= 1437—38). 'Alī Yazdī has another line for it:

بیاسا دمی از دم قدسیم / که رضوان فردوس فردوسیم

Be relieved a moment by my holy breath enjoying peace of mind /
For I am indeed the angel guarding the gate of paradise.

2. Exaltation of the book in general

Writing poems suitable for cover inscriptions was regarded as a special art. Bookbinders inscribed sometimes poems which were devoted exclusively to the importance of texts and manuscripts in general, such as the famous poems of Jāmī about books. Here are samples of poems found on the cover of the Amīr Ḥusraw's *Ḥamsa* in the Vever collection, which has already been mentioned:

بهتر ز کتاب در جهان یاری نیست / در غمگده زمانه غمخواری نیست
هر لحظه ازو به گوشه تنهایی / صد راحت هست و هرگز آزاری نیست

There is no companion in the world better than a book /
There is no sympathizer in this Sorrow-stricken [abode and] time but a book //

Every moment in the corner of solitude, it provides [you] much comfort without any harm.

نوباوه بستان لطایف سخن است / دیباچه دیوان معارف سخن است
سری که مقدسان از آن محرومند / سربرزده از زبان عارف سخن است

Speech is truly the youngsters of the garden of niceties /
[And it is indeed] the prologue to the collection of knowledge //
The secret that is deprived from the sanctimonious /
[And] that is revealed from the tongues of mystics is truly the [very] speech.

Here, *suḥan* (speech) refers to the writing and books.

3. The title of book

The titles of the books in some cover inscriptions are either clearly stated or implied. Bookbinders usually preferred implication to direct statement of the title, because they considered that allusions gave more interest to the in-

It should be noted that both *riḡvān* and *firdaws* mean paradise, the former being an Arabic word and the latter a Persian one. *Riḡvān* is also the name of the angel guarding the gate of Paradise.

انیس کنج تنهایی کتاب است / فروغ صبح دانائی کتاب است
بود بی مزد و منت اوستادی / ز دانش بخشدت هر دم گشادی

The companion of solitude is a book /
The luminosity of the morning of knowledge is a book. //
It is a master, not claiming any wage and obligation /
It solves your difficulties with the help of knowledge [kept in].

As far as we know, Šaraf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī is one of the poets who wrote verses for the covers of manuscripts such as the *Šāhnāma* of Firdawsī, a composite manuscript of *Dīwāns* of 'Iṣmat Buḥārī and Amīr Šāhi, *Tārīḡ-e Amīr Taymur* (normally his *Zafar Nāma*), the *Ḥamsa* of Niẓāmī, *Ḥamsatayn* of Niẓāmī and Amīr Ḥusraw, *Mathnawī* of Rūmī, *Mašāriq* on Islamic traditions or *ḥadīth* (apparently the *Mašāriq al-Anwār al-Nabawiyya min Šiḡāḡ al-Aḡbār al-Moṣṭafawiyya* by Rāḡī al-Dīn Ṣaḡānī, cf. *Kašf al-zunūn*), and finally for many anthologies including the one the cover of which bears these lines:

جنگها در بحر باشد و ندرین بهر شریف / بحرهای بینی گهرز، وان گهرها بس لطیف
Jongs (ships) are naturally in the seas (*baḡr*); in this noble sea (*baḡr*) /
You can see many pearl-raising seas with very fine pearls.

Both *jong* and *safina* mean ship as well as anthology; the former word is borrowed from an Indian language and the latter from Arabic.

scriptions. Here are some examples for both ways; on all the bindings mentioned below, the inscription is located on the fore-edge flap.

A. Clear statement of the title (listed according to the chronological order)

1. A leather cover of the *Ḥamsa* of Amīr Ḥusraw Dihlavī, copy dated 867/1462—3 in Baḡdād (Istanbul, Topkapı Saray, R. 1021) [8]. The two distiches in *nasta'liq* are inscribed within two panels tooled and gilt. The title is in the first line: *Panj Ganj-ast Ḥamsa-ye Ḥusraw*.

2. A leather cover of a *Kitāb al-Tajrīd*, copied in 874/1469—70 in Egypt or Syria, now in the Chester Beatty Library, No. 357 [9]. The tooled inscription in *thulth* is placed in a panel with a small foliated panel on each side. It reads: *Al-Thānī min al-Tajrīd lil-Qadurī 'alā madhhab Abī Ḥanīfa*.

3. A leather cover of the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī, copied in 887/1482 for Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqara in Herāt (Istanbul, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, 1905) [10]. Its lacquered inscription in *nashī* is found in four panels in an armlet pattern; it says:

تا قیامت گر ره صورت روی / تا قیامت بوی معنی نشنوی
جان جاویدان اگر خواهی بخوان / منتوی معنوی مولوی

If you tread the way of form until the Doomsday /
You will not sense the scent of meaning //

If you want [to have] an eternal soul, read /
the spiritual *Mathnawī* of Rūmī.

4. A loose leather cover of Jāmī's *Dīwān* (Herāt, 9th/18th century?), kept in Bibliothèque nationale de France Paris, Suppl. Pers. 2050 A [11]. The distich of its inscription contains the title of the book and the name of the dedicatee, in *nasta'liq*.

حسن این دیوان جامی شد یکی صد، بل زیاد / تا قبول قاسم سلطان جهانگیر اوفتاد
Each merit of this *Dīwān* of Jāmī was multiplied in one-hundred-folds, perhaps more than that amount /
For it was accepted by Qāsim b. Sulṭān Jahāngir.

5. A gilt leather cover of the *Šarḡ-i Iṣārāt*, now detached from the manuscript, from the late 10th/16th century, in the Gulbenkian Collection [12]. Its inscription is located in two panels in an armlet pattern with a distich in *nasta'liq*:

بسی در هاست در حسن عبارت / ننگند نطق در شرح اشارت

There are many pearls in eloquence /
The speech falls short in describing *Šarḡ-i Iṣārāt*.

6. A lacquer cover of a copy of Jāmī's *Ḥamsa*, completed in 951/1544—5 by Maḡmūd Dargazini (Vienna, National Library, AF 66) [13]. Two distiches in *nasta'liq* can be read in four panels in an armlet pattern. The inscription has been damaged and its reading is difficult.

B. Implied title

7. A gilt leather cover of Firdawsī's *Šāhnāma*, copied in 931/1524—5 by Muḡammad Herāvī (Saint-Petersburg, IOS, D 184) which according to Petrosiyan was produced in Tabrīz [14]. The cover inscription in *nasta'liq* has two lines placed in two panels in an armlet pattern:

4. The name of the author

It can usually be found in the verses or phrases of cover inscriptions, as shown in some of the instances mentioned above, e. g. the name of Jāmī on the cover of his *Dīwān*, Amīr Ḥusraw on the cover of his *Panj Gang*, and Qadurī on the cover of his *Kitāb al-Tajrīd*. Two other examples could be added:

8. A gilt leather cover of *Kulliyyāt* of Sa'dī, copied in 9th/15th century (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Pers. 814) [15]. Two distiches in *thulth* are inscribed on the upper and lower panels of the front cover:

برو خوشه چین باش سعدی صفت / که گرد آوری خرمن معرفت
Go and be a Sa'dī-like gleaner /
In order to gather the crop of Knowledge.

که گفتار سعدی پسند آیدش / نصیحت کنی، سودمند آیدش

In order to be interested in the speech of Sa'dī /
In order to have good ears for [Sa'dī-like] advice, benefiting from it.

5. Allusions and relevance to the text

It was customary to include interesting poems or phrases expressing the subject matter or stance of the book. Here are some examples.

10. A loose leather cover of Firdawsī's *Šāhnāma* from the 11th/17th century (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 358—1885) [18]. Two distiches in *nasta'liq* are inscribed on the fore-edge flap, denoting the relationship between the cover and Firdawsī's poem.

سکه ای کاندن سخن فردوسی طوسی نشاند / تا نینداری که کس از زمره فرسی نشاند
اول از بالای کرسی بر زمین آمد سخن / او دگر بار از زمینش برد و بر کرسی نشاند

[This is] the currency that Firdawsī of Tūs coined in speech /
You can never imagine a Persian speaking to be able to write such a [magnificent] poetry.
First, the speech fell down from the throne to the ground /
[but] then Firdawsī elevated it from the earth, establishing it on the throne.

این خمسه کزو عهد شد تازه / افتاد به هر مقام از آن آوازه
جلدش کرد از ادیم، فیروزه چرخ / وز تافته...

This is the *Ḥamsa* by which the ancient epoch has been renewed /
Its fame has spread in all parts of the world //
The vault of heaven covered its binding with the finest leather /
And with taffeta...

مرین نامه شهریاری بخوان / سر از چرخ گردون همی بگذران

Study this Book of the Kings /
[And] you will tower above the sphere of heaven.

9. A loose leather cover of Jāmī's *Dīwān* preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Pers. 2050 A [16] which has already been referred to (see No. 4). Apart from the verse mentioned above, two other distiches can be found:

دفتر جامی است این از گفته های عشق پُر / می برم تا پیش شاه نکته دان خود کثم

This is the book of Jāmī full of love songs /
I took it with me to present it to my acute King.

به بزم گل چو سر ایند نظم جامی را / ز بلبلان همه گلبنانگ آفرین خیزد
When the poems of Jāmī are sung in the feast of flowers /
The nightingales all hail with acclaim.

The copyist apparently modified the second line for the sake of the dedicator or by his order changing *Šuḡ* (the witty beloved) into *Šāh* (king) [17]. Šaraf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī has two poems for *Dīwāns* of 'Iṣmat Buḥārī and Amīr Šāhi specifying the names of the poets (see above).

11. A leather cover of the same work, copied in 932/1525—6 (Saint-Petersburg, IOS, D 184) [19]. The spine of the flap and back cover has two armlet panels housing a distich in *nasta'liq*:

مرین نامه شهریاری بخوان / سر از چرخ گردون همی بگذران

Study this Book of the Kings /
[And] you will tower above the sphere of heaven.

On lacquer bindings, the subject matter of a poem is sometimes related to the miniature painting of the cover itself. A prominent example is:

12. A binding from 19th century with a depiction on both covers of the battle between Nādir Šāh Afšar and Muḡammad Šāh of India at Karnal (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 1827—1922) [20]. The 10 distiches found on the front and back covers are the same in both cases, though the battle scenes are different.

It was also customary to include the best passages of a poet's works on the cover of his *Dīwān*, as is the case with many manuscripts of the *Dīwān* of Ḥāfiẓ for instance.

13. A loose gilt leather cover from 9th/15th century of a *Dīwān* of Ḥāfiẓ (London, The Keir collection, No. VIII. 25) [21]. Its inscription in *nasta'liq* is a distich placed in two armllet panels in the fore-edge flap.

کس چو حافظ نگشاد از رخ اندیشه نقاب / تا سر زلف عروسان چمن شانه زند

Nobody, but Ḥāfiẓ, has managed to unveil the visage of thought / Since combing of the end of the meadow-brides' tresses.

14. A loose leather cover from 11th/17th century, certainly of a *Dīwān* of Ḥāfiẓ (Gulbenkian collection) [22]. There are six distiches in *nasta'liq* from a *gāzal* by Ḥāfiẓ with these opening lines:

نلم جز مهر مهر وین طریقی بر نمی گیرد / ز هر در می دهم پندش، ولیکن در نمی گیرد

My heart does not follow any course [of action] but the course of moon-faced beauties /

I give him [= my heart] the advice of any sort, but [alas] it is futile, making no improvement.

15. A loose lacquer cover of a *Dīwān* of Ḥāfiẓ with a miniature from Isfahān (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 1788—1960) [23]. Five distiches in poor *nasta'liq* from a *gāzal* with the following opening lines are inscribed in the compartments of the border:

6. Reverence for the book and the manuscript

Qur'anic verses, holy traditions, and the Divine Attributes were inscribed on Qur'an covers as a way of revering them. It was the case with the magnificent bindings of prayer books such as *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Sajjādiyya*. Inscriptions on Qur'an covers are more varied; they include short Qur'anic verses, especially the *Āyat al-kursī*, but very often the following quotation from the *sūra* of *al-Wāqī'a*.

فی کتاب مکنون لا یمسه الا المطهرون (الواقعه / ۸۴)

In a book that is protected. None but the purified shall touch it (Qur'an LVI, 77—79).

On many bindings, the last verse is found alone on the fore-edge flap. Traditions from the Prophet, Imām Rīdā or Imām Ṣādiq, the names of the twelve Imāms, the prayer to be recited after reading the Holy Qur'an or supplication formulae (*Yā Ṣāḥib al-Zamān*, *Tawakkaltu 'alā Allāh*, *Yā Imām Muhammad Bāqir*, etc.) are inscribed on the bindings of some Qur'an manuscripts made in Šī'a milieu. The covers of a Qur'an made in 1308 have a portrait of the Prophet, with some information about his figure; the Throne Verse, the *sūra al-Iḥlās* (CXII), the names of the twelve Imāms and the prayer

7. Prayers for good health and long life

Inscriptions in Arabic similar to those found on earthenwares or iron vessels, wishing good health and long life to the owner, are seldom used for book covers.

20. A leather cover of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, copied in 849/1445—6 in Šīrāz, has an formula of this kind inscribed

ساقی به نور باده بر افروز جام ما / مطرب بگو که کار جهان شد به کام ما

O *sāqī*, kindle our cup with the light of wine /
O [dear] minstrel, play [your instrument], for the course of world is according to what we desired.

An interesting cover inscription in *nasta'liq* made up of three couplets contains a few terms related to the transcription of manuscripts such as *kelk* (pen), *mašq* (drill in penmanship), *davāt* (inkwell), *kagaz* (paper), *fard* (literally: one or individual, and specifically: a larger fiche) and *sarmasq* (model of calligraphy). The inscription is stamped on a leather cover from the 11th/16th century in the Vever collection (Arthur Sackler Gallery):

داورا کلک قدرتت چه کند / مشق شایسته جهانبانی
به دولت آورده ز دوده شام / مهر کاغذ ز صبح نورانی
هفت فرد سپهر می گردد / زیر مشقت به فصل ربانی

O judge, what will the pen of your power do?
The *mašq* that suits the government of the world,
Having brought the night to the inkwell with lampblack /
The sun of the paper becomes bright with the morning
The seven "Uniques" of the sky pass /
Under your *mašq* by the divine grace.

The first hemistich, unnaturally, begins from the left rather than from the upper right.

which is to be said when seeing the crescent have also been inscribed [24]. Further examples can also be mentioned:

16. A loose leather cover with the Throne Verse inscribed in *thulth* inside 10 armllet panels on its borders, certainly from a Qur'an manuscript, now in the Islamic Museum in Berlin (No. I. 839) [25]. It is said to have been produced in Egypt of Syria during the 8th/14th century.

الله لا اله الا هو الحی القيوم

17. A loose tooled leather cover from a Qur'an manuscript made in Egypt or Syria and dated to the 8th/14th century has Qur'an LVI, 79 in *thulth* on its fore-edge flap (Chicago Oriental Institute, No. A 1216) [26].

18. Short sentences were apparently tooled on Qur'an covers for reverence and as a blessing in Arabia. A Qur'an binding from 9th/15th century has *Ḥamdān* — Praise [belongs to Allah] — and *Allāhu ḥasbi* — God is enough for me — tooled on both covers (Chicago Oriental Institute, No. A 12135) [27].

19. A loose leather cover made in Egypt during the 9th/15th century has the Beautiful Names such as *al-Muṣawwar*, *al-Ḡaffār* and *al-Qāḥir* in Kūfic letters in the compartments of its border (Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 1070B—1869) [28].

in *thulth* in the upper and lower rectangular panels (Istanbul, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, 1906) [29].

السعادة والسلامة وطول العمر

Felicity and safety and long life.

8. The name of the owner

The name of the owner was sometimes inscribed on the bindings, much like *ex-libris* on European books. Two cases can be found: (i) the name is that of the person who ordered the manuscript and its binding; (ii) The name is that of the person for whom the manuscript has been prepared and bound as a gift: formulae such as *bi rasm-i ḥazāna-yi...* (for the treasury of...) are usually found in this case. A few bindings illustrate this:

21. A leather cover of the *Ihyā' 'ulum al-dīn* copied in 8th/14th century has an inscription in a *ta'liq*-like hand (Leiden University Library, Or. 408b) [30]. It has been inscribed by heating the leather and piercing it, not by tooling.

عمل هذا المجلد برسم الحاج ابراهيم

This binding was made for al-Ḥājī Ibrāhīm.

22. A lacquer cover of a Qur'an copied in 1293/1876 and bound in 1294/1877, with an inscription in *nasta'liq* (Tehran, Golestan collection, No. 64) [31].

حسب الفرموده جناب مستطاب شيخ الاطباء بتاريخ شهر محرم الحرام سنة ١٢٩٤

By the [noble] order of his excellency Ṣayḥ al-Aṭibbā' in the month of Muḥarram of the year 1294.

23. A lacquer binding sold at Sotheby's, on 22 April 1980. The inscription reads:

بر حسب فرمایش بندگان پناهی مقرب الخاقان سهام الملک مصور و منقش
گردید رجب ١٢٧٤

Illustrated and ornamented by the [noble] order of the Slaves-Refuge, the Emperor's near-stationed, Sahām al-Mulk, Rajab 1274.

24. A leather cover of *Kalīla wa Dimna*, copied in 834/1430—1 in Herāt (Istanbul, Topkapı Saray, H. 362), with the name of Bāysungur Mīrẓā tooled in the center of the back cover [32].

25. A leather cover of 'Aṭṭar's *Sitta*, eight of his *mathnawīs*, copied in 841/1437—8 in Herāt (Istanbul, Topkapı Saray, A. 3059) [33]. The inscription in *thulth* on the fore-edge flap reads:

لخزانه السلطان الاعظم معين الدولة و الدين شاه رخ بهادر خان خلد الله ملكه

For the treasury of the great *sultān*, the Supporter of the religion and State, Šāhrūḥ Bahādūr, May Allah eternalize his kingdom.

9. The name of the binder

The names of bookbinders hardly ever appear on the bindings. Their anonymity is similar to that of illuminators and miniaturists. The scribes usually have their names on the manuscripts; illuminators' names are occasionally found, but those of the bookbinders as well as the painters are rare.

31. As far as I know, the earliest binding with the name of a binder is that of Qur'an, dated 706/1306—7 (Ancient Iran Museum) [39]. Mehdi Bahrami believes he could not find any earlier manuscript with the name of a bookbinder

26. A leather cover of Nizāmī's *Ḥamsa*, copied in 849/1445—6 in Herāt (Istanbul, Topkapı Saray, H. 781) [34]. A tooled inscription in *thulth* on the fore-edge flap reads:

برسم الخزانة السلطانية البایزیدية

For the treasury of *sultān* Bāyazīd.

It is followed by a prayer for Bāyazīd: *ṭawwala Allāhu 'um-rahū* (May Allah prolong his lifetime) — in a small panel on the flap.

27. A leather cover of the *Dīwān* of Kamāl Ḥujandī, copied in 856/1452 in Herāt (Istanbul, Topkapı Saray, E. H. 1637) [35]. The following words are inscribed on the fore-edge flap within three armllet panels:

لخزانه كتب السلطان الاعظم / معز السلطنة و الدولة و الدين ابو
القاسم باير / بهادر خان خلد الله تعالى ملكه و سلطانه

For the book treasury of the *sultān* the most high honour of the sultanate, government and faith, Abū al-Qāsim Bahādūr Ḥān, may God perpetuate his reign and kingdom.

28. The leather cover of an anthology of *Tarjī'āt* (Vienna, National Library, N. F. 140), strophe poems gathered for Abū al-Qāsim Bābur (853—861) [36]. Its small-scale inscription on the fore-edge flap has been tooled two lines of long festoons:

لخزانه كتب السلطان الاعظم ابو القاسم باير بهادر خلد ملكه

For the treasury of books of the *sultān* most high Abū al-Qāsim Bābur Bahādūr, may [God] perpetuate his reign.

29. The leather cover of a manuscript copied in 863/1458—9 in Šīrāz (Istanbul, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, No. 1551) [37], for the treasury of the Qārā Qoyunlu *sultān* Pīr Budaq Ḥān.

30. A leather cover of a *moraqqa'*, with a long inscription in *nasta'liq* on its borders dated 1147/1734—5 and with another date — 1151/1738—9 — on the back cover (Saint-Petersburg, IOS, E 14) [38]. The border inscription bears the name of the owner, Mīrẓā Mahdī; it consists of eight distiches in armllet panels. Some words are illegible.

فلک عز و منزلت را بدر / صدره اما فزون از آتش قدر
زینت افزای مجلس از دولت / میرزا مهدی آن ملک فطرت
از پی ضبط سال و اصل زمان / دان ز هر مصرع از حساب نشان
باد چون خط به ماه چهره یار / صاحبش را به کامرانی کار ١١٤٧

The last distich is the chronogram for 1147.

stamped on it, the binding being almost contemporary with the copy. The reproduction of the cover gives the name of the binder as 'Abd al-Rahmān [40]. According to the colophon, the tooled goat-leather cover is from Tabrīz.

32. Bosch gives four examples of covers made in South Arabia, preserved in Chicago Oriental Institute, three from the 8th/14th century with the signature: *'Amala Amīn* (made by Amin) [41] and one from the 9th/15th century with: *'Amala Rabī'* [42].

33. Sakisian [43] and later Gratzl published a leather cover, without giving the title of the manuscript, dated 735/1334—5; the binder's name is Muḥammad 'Alī [44].

34. A leather cover dated 863/1458—9 with the name of Zayn al-'Abidīn b. Muḥammad (Istanbul, Turk and Islamic Arts Museum, No. 1591) was published by Aga Oglu [45] and later by Gratzl [46].

Mentioning bookbinders' names on the covers became more frequent after the 11th/17th century, especially on lacquer covers. The production date is sometimes stated in the latter. Some examples of signatures found on these covers are listed below in chronological order; they are exclusively from the Golestan collection (formerly Royal Library) but they are representative of this production.

Table 1

Date	Title	Bookbinders	No.
1109/1697-8	Qur'ān	Ustādh Muḥammad Bāqer	1004
1117/1705-6		Ustādh Muḥammad Bāqer	991
1171/1757-8		'Alī Ašraf	989
1209/1794-5		Muḥammad Hāšim	985
1218/1803-4		Mirzā Bābā	1005
1219/1804-5		Āgā Zamān	998
1231/1815-6	Gulistān of Sa'dī	Ustādh Aḥmad	233
1237/1821-2	Qur'ān	Mirzā Aḥmad Naqqāš Bāši	885
1240/1824-5		Mahdī al-Ḥusaynī al-Imāmī	1054
1241/1825-6		'Alī	969
1242/1826-7		Muḥammad Zamān	1007
copied in 1251/1835-6		Hāj Mīr Sayf Allāh Ibrāhīm al-Ḥusaynī al-Iṣfahānī	1436
1258/1842-3		Ustādh Muḥammad, Ḥasan Šīrāzī	1008
1274/1857-8		Luṭf 'Alī Šīrāzī	654
1278/1861-2		design by Ustādh Abū al-Qāsim Mudḥahhib Bāši, executed by Muḥammad Taqī Mudḥahhib	647
1279/1862-3		Ismā'il Naqqāš Bāši Iṣfahānī	736
1287/1870-1		Design by Ustādh Muḥammad Šādiq, executed by Ismā'il Naqqāš Bāši	641
1294/1877		Asad Allāh Mudḥahhib Bāši	1006

The problem is that we cannot decide from the signatures, which part of the bookbinding process each of them is responsible for. In lacquer works, painters, illuminators and calligraphers were all equally involved. We do know that some of the artists, for example Muḥammad Zamān and Ismā'il Iṣfahānī, were painters. Did they bind the books too? The names of cover makers are hardly coupled with bookbinders' names: the covers of a copy of Niẓāmī's *Ḥamsa* (Tehran, Golestan collection, No. 1937) bear a signature: 'Amal-i Mīr Ḥalīl Šahḥāf and two distiches on the back cover with a date (1258/1842—3):

خسروا ملک و جاهت افزون باد / چهره دولت تو گلگون باد
هر که گردن کشد ز فرمانت / ابد الدهر غرقه در خون باد

O his Majesty, may your kingdom and dignity be augmented /
May the face of your state be effulged //
One who refuses to obey you / May be drowned in his blood forever.

10. Names of the painters, designers and calligraphers of inscriptions

There is no doubt that many of the names discussed in the preceding section are those of calligraphers and painters.

11. Date of production of the cover

The date of completion of the covers is seldom expressed on leather bindings. A date can only be attributed tentatively, according to that of the manuscript; in a few instances, it may be either expressed in digits, or fully spelt out or as a chronogram. The covers of a copy of Firdawsī's *Šāhnāma* ordered by Amīr Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad Mīrak — the son of Amīr Čahmāq Šāmī, the governor of Yazd — were dated in this way: the chronograms inscribed on the binding were written by Šaraf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, the author of the *Zaḡar Nāma* and the grand vizier of Šāhrūh (Istanbul, Topkapı Saray,

R. 1019) [49]. The three distiches giving the dates of 839/1435—6, 840/1436—7 and 841/1437—8 were included in his collection of poetical works:

از دو باب کتاب شهنامه / فهم تاریخ کرد فرزانه ۸۳۹ (= 839)

By *du bāb* (two doors) are meant the two covers of the binding.

مقرر کرده تاریخ مجلد / قضا با میر شمس الدین محمد ۸۴۰ (= 840)

نسخه شاهنامه از توفیق حق چون شد تمام / گفت در تاریخ آن فردوس
فردوسی سلام ۸۴۱ (= 841)

The use of dated stamps for book covers was widespread in Transoxiana from the 13th/19th century onwards. Oddly enough, binders were sometimes still using the earlier stamps, so that the dates refer to the time when the tool

was produced rather than to the actual time when the book was bound. Forged dates are also found on covers: for example the date of 1276/1859—60 on a lacquer binding made by Ḥāji 'Abd al-Razzāq of Iṣfahān has been changed into 876 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 1829—1922) [50].

12. The place of production

No place name has been found on leather covers; when such a piece of information appears in catalogues and bibliographies, it relies on conjectures and comparison with the style of the ornamentation, mostly on place where the manuscript was written. In the case of lacquer covers, the place of production of the binding is also rarely stated; the cover of a manuscript made by Āgā Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥasan (London, Victoria and Albert Museum No. 1788—1960) has a versified inscription in a poor hand, with

the name of the binder and the place of production in armllet panels alternating with small circles:

در دار السلطانه / اصفهان / در کارگاه / عالیشان / آقا میرزا / محمد
حسن / نقاش / اتمام / پذیرفت

It was completed in the capital Iṣfahān in the workshop of His Honor Āqā Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥasan, the painter.

Technical and graphic aspects

1. The location of the inscriptions

The inscriptions on book covers are located: (i) on the fore-edge flap, either on its inner face or on the outer one. The inscriptions were never placed on the spine, for they would soon have been damaged; (ii) on both back and front covers, sometimes only on front covers; (iii) on the inner

face of either of the two covers; (iv) on the flap. The inscription here was usually the same as that of the front cover, because it could be read when the flap rested on the front cover.

2. The panels for inscriptions

(i) Inscriptions were usually located in a compartment in order to make them discernible. The panels were circular, rectangular, star-like, armllet-like, etc. Long texts such as Qur'ānic verses, passages of poems especially *gāzals*, were placed along the edges of the covers. They normally began

from the left upper corner, but sometimes from the left lower one. Inscriptions were rarely repeated on both covers; (ii) *šamsas* (rosettes), *turanjs* (medallions) and *sar turanjs* (pendants) were considered the most appropriate places for short inscriptions.

3. The calligraphic hands

The writing used for inscriptions was often calligraphic, for the bindings were produced for noble and wealthy patrons; a calligrapher was asked to write the text to be used for inscriptions. *Kūfī*, *thulth*, *nāshī* and *nasta'liq* have been used; I have even seen the following distich inscribed in *gubār* hand (literally: dust, meaning here: minute hand) on a cover made by Šuratgar for a manuscript in the Vešāl family's collection:

دست من گیر که بیچارگی از حد بگنشت / سر من دار که در پای تو ریزم جان را

Seize my hands, for desperation exceeds beyond my endurance /
Seize my head, for I want to give my life upon your steps.

Calligraphic pieces are often found on lacquer bindings; design, calligraphy and painting are evenly matched.

Mistakes, alterations and modifications occur in the classic poems quoted on the covers. For example, in two distiches inscribed on two bindings in the Victoria and Albert Museum, one hemistich is left out and the rhyme in the fourth hemistich is wrong: *Mahv bād* instead of *dur bād*, which rhymes with, *manšūr bād* in the second hemistich [51].

4. A typology of inscribed book covers

Inscriptions on both leather and lacquer bindings are common, but are seldom found on other types of covers. A few exceptions can be mentioned here: (i) an embroidered inscription on a cloth cover of a copy of the *Yavāqit al-ansāb* in the Nawā'ī Museum in Taškent reads:

ز بس بود منسوب خیر الانام / یواقیب انساب گردید نام

Because it dealt so much with the genealogy of the best of people / it was named *The Rubies of Genealogies*.

(ii) A brass inscription on the cover of the *Travel Book* of Nāṣer al-Dīn Šāh Qājār which was sent as a gift to the Austrian emperor, François Joseph (Vienna, National Library Cod. mixt. 1462). The name of the king was cut from brass and attached on the velvet cover.

5. Miscellaneous remarks

(i) Binders mostly paid attention to the decorative and graphic values of the inscriptions they made on the covers; (ii) inscriptions on leather covers are raised because they are tooled with stamps; (iii) no name of bookbinder has been found in colophons so far; (iv) metal and brass plates for inscriptions are naturally suitable for some covers, not applicable to others; (v) tools or plates with the name of the binder have been used in Transoxiana and in areas where Arabic was spoken, but their use was not restricted to the original owner of the tool / plate; (vi) on leather covers, inscriptions were usually tooled directly on the covers. In

some cases, they were stamped on separate pieces of leather, then set into the place prepared for them on the covers; (vii) on lacquer bindings, the scribes used to write the inscriptions in various colours such as white lead, lazur-line, chrome green, etc., then the illuminators worked on the finishing; (viii) classic cover inscriptions were part of a group of elements aiming at a consistent decorative composition for the bindings, but nowadays bookbinders like Muḥammad Ḥusayn Islāmpanāh use inscriptions merely for the decoration of bookcovers.

Notes

1. This does not apply to the earliest examples published by G. Marçais and L. Poinssot, "Objets kairouanais, IX^e au XIII^e siècle. Re-liures, verreries, cuivres et bronzes, bijoux", *Direction des antiquités et arts, Notes et documents*, IX, fasc. 1 (Tunis—Paris, 1948) or U. Dreiholz, "Some aspects of early Islamic bookbindings from the Great Mosque of Šana'ā', Yemen", *Scribes et manuscrits du Mo-yen-Orient*, éd. F. Déroche et F. Richard (Paris, 1997), pp. 15—34.
2. P. Adam, "Über türkisch-arabisch-persische Manuskripte und deren Einbände", *Archiv für Buchbinderei*, IV (1904—5), pp. 141—3, 145—52, 161—8, 177—85, and V (1905), pp. 3—9.
3. E. Gratzl, "Book covers", *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to The Present*, eds. A. U. Pope and Ph. Ackermann (London, 1938—9), pp. 1975—94.
4. 1960; G. Bosch, J. Carswell and G. Petherbridge, *Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking* (Chicago, 1981).
5. D. Haldane, *Islamic Bookbindings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1983).
6. Cf. S. Melikian-Shirvani, "Les bronzes du Khorassan", *Studia Iranica*, III/1 (1974) à VIII/2 (1979).
7. ʿTaraz, a city in Turkestan, was well known for its very beautiful girls and handsome boys.
8. O. Aslanapa, "Bookbindings", *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia, 14th—16th centuries*, ed. B. Gray (Paris—London, 1979), p. 70.
9. Bosch, Carswell and Petherbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
10. Aslanapa, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
11. F. Richard, *Splendeurs persanes, Manuscrits du XII^e au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1997), pp. 102—3.
12. Gratzl, *op. cit.*, pl. 962.
13. D. Duda, "Islamische Handschriften I, Persische Handschriften", *Die illuminierten Handschriften und Inkunabeln der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, IV (Vienna, 1983), p. 33.
14. Yu. A. Petrosiyan *et al.*, *Pages of Perfection. Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint-Petersburg* (Lugano, 1995), p. 220.
15. Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
17. Jāmī, *Dīwān*, ed. A'ālā Ḥān Afšāh-zād (Tehrān, 1378/1997), i, p. 618.
18. Haldane, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
19. Petrosiyan, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
20. Haldane, *op. cit.*, p. 128—9.
21. R. W. Ferrier, *Arts of Persia* (New Haven—London, 1989), p. 290.
22. Gratzl, *op. cit.*, pl. 980.
22. Haldane, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
24. Tehrān, Golestan collection, No. 967; B. Ātābāy, *Fihrist-i Qorānhā-yi ḥaṭṭi-yi kitābhāna-yi salṭānati* (Tehrān, 1351/1973), p. 71.
25. Bosch, Carswell and Petherbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 111; another binding with the same verse from the 9th/15th century has been reproduced p. 207.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 130—3.
28. Haldane, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
29. Aslanapa, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
30. M. Weisweiler, *Der islamische Bucheinband des Mittelalters nach Handschriften aus deutschen, holländischen un türkischen Bibliotheken* (Wiesbaden, 1962), p. 182 and pl. 21.
31. Ātābāy, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
32. Aslanapa, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
36. Duda, *op. cit.*, p. 71 and pl. 16.
37. Gratzl, *op. cit.*, p. 1991, No. 21; it was first published by Afa Oflu.
38. Petrosiyan, *op. cit.*, p. 276.
39. M. Bahrami, *Iranian art, Treasures from the Imperial Collections and Museums of Iran* (New York, 1949), p. 61; bibliographical and codicological descriptions in Part II, pp. 26—7.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

41. Bosch, Carswell and Petherbridge, *op. cit.*, pp. 125—6 and 133 (Nos. A 12132, 12134 and 12146).
42. *Ibid.*, p. 142 (No. A 12125).
43. A. Sakisian, "La reliure dans la Perse occidentale, sous les Mongols, au XIV^e et au début du XV^e siècle", *Ars Islamica*, I (1934), pp. 83—4 et fig. 3.
44. Gratzl, *op. cit.*, p. 1988, No. 2.
45. M. Afa Oflu, *Persian Bookbindings of the Fifteenth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1935), fig. 17.
46. Gratzl, *op. cit.*, p. 1991, No. 20.
47. Petrosiyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 66, 307.
48. I have prepared a table with some examples found in the libraries of the Uzbekistan Academy of sciences and of Uppsala University; the oldest dated instances are from the second half of the 12th/18th century.
49. P. 1929.
50. Haldane, *op. cit.*, p. 131, where the figure is mistakenly given as 874.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 130 and 132. See also Nos. 9, 13 and 15; in the last two instances, *nakešid* and *begu* have been used incorrectly.
52. Duda, *op. cit.*, pl. 295.

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Front cover:

Plate 1. No. 13-24. Kawahara Keiga, "A view of a highway station", *Nihon Fukei-zu (Views of Japan)*. Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted, colour on silk, gold, 71.2 × 79.3 cm (whole), 52.5 × 62.3 cm (painting), no seal, no signature.

Back cover:

Plate 2. No. 13-34/39(8). *Idem*, "A visit to a Shinto shrine", *Life of Japanese people*. Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted (album folio), colour on silk, gold, 35.1 × 46.3 cm (whole), 32.3 × 44.3 cm (painting), no seal, no signature.

Plate 3. No. 13-34/39(35). *Idem*, "Wedding ceremony", *ibid.* Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted (album folio), colour on silk, gold, 32.5 × 44.5 cm, no seal, no signature.

Plate 4. No. 13-34/39(17). *Idem*, "A greeting of the bridegroom's family by a representative of the house of the bride", *ibid.* Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted (album folio), colour on silk, gold, 32.2 × 44.0 cm, no seal, no signature.

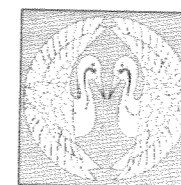
Plate 5. No. 13-34/39(30). *Idem*, "A scene at a cemetery", *ibid.* Edo Period (19th c.). Painting unformatted (album folio), colour on silk, 32.3 × 44.4 cm, no seal, no signature.

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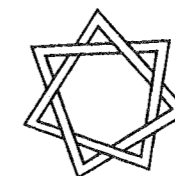
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