INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR OF THE FLAP OF A BINDING
841 A.H.—1438 A.D.

The exterior and interior of the cover are reproduced in Plates I and II

Doubtful: Dark brown leather. Decoration in leather filigree against a blue painted background. The border is formed by apes interlaced with delicate flower scrolls. In the center of the five-sided panel is a landscape showing a realistic representation of a lion biting into the trunk of a tree. On one side of this motif are two ch'ei-lin, on the other a Chinese lion, and the whole background is filled in with naturalistic leaf and flower stems. The rectangular joint of the flap, divided into three sections by narrow braided bands, is decorated with flower arabesques, shield motifs, an animal, and phoenixes, all executed in filigree.

Exterior: Dark brown leather over pasteboard. Decoration in blind tooling. The background is stippled. A continuous flower scroll forms a narrow border on three sides of the flap similar to that of the exterior of the front cover. A landscape containing legendary creatures of Far Eastern origin decorates the five-sided panel, one half of which is the mirror image of the other. In the center a heart-shaped shield, embellished by bands, incloses a mass of flames. Chinese lions attack this curious motif from each side, their teeth biting into it. Separated from the central group by flowering trees, two more Chinese lions, their heads turned back over their shoulders, are entangled in long tongues of forked lightning.
EXTERIOR OF THE FRONT COVER OF A BINDING

849 A.H.—1446 A.D.

The interior of the cover is reproduced in Plate V.

Size: 26.5 by 14.5 cm. Dark brown leather over pasteboard. Decoration in block-stamping and blind tooling. The background of the design is stippled. The border consists of several bands outlined in gold, of both intertwined and braided designs. A landscape scene occupies most of the central panel, at the top and bottom of which are broad bands of inscription. In the lower part of the landscape at the left is a recumbent cb'l-i-lm, its raised head turned back. A flowering tree separates it from a dragon fighting a flying phoenix at the mouth of a rocky lair. In the upper part of the picture under a tree with a double trunk is a legendary Chinese creature, and a young man wrestling with a bear. In the branches of the tree are three apes, two of which are playing, while the third watches the wrestling match. Two recumbent foxes and a flying bird complete the scene. The composition of the landscape is very similar in treatment to that in Plate I. The Arabic inscription, executed against a background of arabesque tendrils, is a verse of blessing, which may be translated: "Happiness, health, and long life to the owner, as long as a pigeon coos."

The exterior of the back cover is decorated with a medallion containing two phoenixes; the exterior of the flap depicts in blind tooling a combat between two dragons and two phoenixes and lions. On the exterior of the joint appears the title of the manuscript and the name of the author. The binding incloses a manuscript of Matbawi by the famous mystic poet Djalal al-Din Rumi; it was copied by an anonymous calligrapher in the year 849 A.H. (1446 A.D.). Many seal impressions indicate that the manuscript belonged to the library of the shrine of Shaikh Safi in Ardebil.

A landscape, identical with that on this cover, and certainly produced by the same block, but without the bands of inscription, appears on another binding belonging to a manuscript in the Topkapu Sarayi Muzesi.

INTERIOR OF THE FRONT COVER OF A BINDING
849 A.H.—1446 A.D.

The exterior of the cover is reproduced in Plate IV.

Dark brown leather. Decoration in blind and gold tooling and in leather filigree. A simple fillet of a gilded braid design forms the border. In the four corners are quadrants of geometrical pattern. The central panel is decorated with a single large almond-shaped medallion in which are two symmetrically arranged phoenixes in "mid-air" against a background of scrolling flower stems. Masterly gold stamping brings out in detail the heads of the birds, their elegantly curved tails, and the plumage of their wings. The background is painted in dark blue.

A similar but not identical motif occurs on the doublure of a binding belonging to a manuscript of Niẓāmi's Khamsa, dated 853 A.H. (1449/50 A.D.), in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Differences in the size and in the details of the two motifs, executed only a few years apart, show that the filigree decorations of Persian bookbindings were produced not by mechanical devices but by freehand cutting.

The doublure of the back cover has an identical theme, and the joint and flap are adorned with fretwork arabesques.
EXTERIOR OF THE BACK COVER OF A BINDING

Before 850 A.H.—1447 A.D.

The interior of the cover and flap are reproduced in Plate VII.

Size: 35 by 26 cm. Brown leather over pasteboard. Decoration in blind and gold tooling. The wide border consists of an extremely complicated and elaborately interlaced design formed of thousands of individual die impressions. In contrast with the border, the central panel is decorated with a crisp all-over trellis pattern, each diamond-shaped section of which is filled alternately with symmetrically composed arabesque and flower scrolls.

The exterior of the front cover has a central medallion decorated with tendrils.

The inclosed manuscript of the poems by Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm Fere d al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, is analogous in its colored and illuminated Chinese paper to the one in the Topkapı Sarayi Müzesi, the binding of which is reproduced in Plates I–III. A dedication on the title-page and several library seal impressions show that it was executed for the library of Sultan Şihāb Rokh Mirzā. The colophon is unfortunately missing, and thus the exact date of its execution is unknown, but the work must have been completed before the death of its owner in 850 A.H. (1447 A.D.).

Formerly in the Library of the Nūrî-Ərəmənīye Mosque in Istanbul, now in the Türk ve İslam Asarı Müzesi. Inventory No. 1624.
INTERIOR OF THE BACK COVER AND FLAP OF A BINDING

Before 850 A.H.—1447 A.D.

The exterior of the cover is reproduced in Plate VI

Brown leather over pasteboard. Decoration in blind and gold tooling, and in leather filigree applied on backgrounds of gold or blue. The toolled design of the border and of the joint is identical with the border design of the exterior. The central panel is of filigree work with an almond-shaped medallion and corner pieces against a background of blue. In the medallion a delicate cross motif is picked out of the arabesque in gold. The space around the medallion is filled with similar scrolling arabesques against a gold painted background. The decoration of the flap is entirely in filigree except for the narrow fillets of the border which are decorated with tooled flower-scroll and braid designs. The doublure of the front cover is also leather filigree work against a background painted in reddish tints and blue.
EXTERIOR OF THE BACK COVER OF A BINDING

About 834 A.H.—1430 A.D.

The interior of the cover and flap are reproduced in Plate IX.

Size: 26 by 17.5 cm. Dark brown leather over pasteboard. Decoration in relief embossing, blind tooling, and gilding. Braided bands and intertwined designs form the border. The decoration of the central panel consists of corner pieces and an almond-shaped medallion with two pendants, all executed in high relief. The medallion contains two che'liin surrounded by conventionalized flower stems. In each corner piece are similar stems and also a flying bird. The exterior of the front cover shows a nearly identical composition, the medallion differing in being decorated with two antelopes under a tree.

The binding incloses a manuscript of an anthology of Persian poets, the colophon of which does not mention the date of execution or the name of the calligrapher. According to the ex libris it was made for the library of Ibrāhīm Sulṭān, Timūrid prince, who was governor of the province of Fārs from 1414 to 1435 A.D.

Formerly in the Fatih-Library in Istanbul, now in the Türk ve İslam Araştırmaları Müzesi. Inventory No. 1600.
INTERIOR OF THE BACK COVER AND FLAP OF A BINDING

About 834 A.H.—1430 A.D.

The exterior of the cover is reproduced in Plate VIII

Black leather over pasteboard. Decoration in gold tooling and leather filigree pasted on a blue painted background. A narrow braided fillet forms the border of the central panel which is embellished with corner pieces and an almond-shaped medallion with two pendants. In the medallion two grazing deer are separated by a tree in full bloom. The corner pieces show the same flying bird and flower scroll motif that appears on the exterior of the front cover, though here the execution is in filigree work. The joint is divided into three sections—narrow panels at each end filled with an intertwined pattern, and a center portion decorated with a repeated peltate motif embellished with symmetrical arabesques. The filigree design of the flap consists of a fine landscape with ibexes, foxes, and hares.

The doublure of the front cover contains a medallion and corner pieces decorated with filigree work. The former shows a phoenix attacking a fox among flower stems, the latter are filled with flowery arabesques only (Fig. 9).