Islamic Bindings & Bookmaking
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Foreword

The planning of the Exhibition and Catalogue has been a cooperative effort, drawing on the individual resources of each of the three collaborators, united in a common desire to do justice to the subject of Islamic bookbinding and bookmaking on all its levels of historical, aesthetic and technical complexity. That such an activity could take place at all was due to the generosity of Mr. Gaylord Donnelley, who provided funds for a planning session which allowed the three participants to meet and work together in Chicago for a month in January, 1980. We are much indebted to him for his support at this early stage.

As a result of this meeting, a grant proposal was drawn up and submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities; this was approved and the Endowment agreed to finance the Exhibition and Symposium, as well as this Catalogue which we hope will serve as a permanent record of our research. Two further results have been the conservation of the Moritz covers in Chicago and preservation in specially designed mounts, and the establishment of an archive of many hundreds of photographs of the Moritz bindings in Chicago, Dublin and Berlin, for the use of future researchers.

We are most grateful to the following individuals and institutions for the loan of material, and their advice and information on many matters: Dr. Patrick Henchy and Dr. David James, of the Chester Beatty Library and Gallery of Oriental Art, Dublin; Dr. Volkmar Enderlein of the Islamic Museum, Berlin, German Democratic Republic; Dr. Klaus Brisch and his assistants at the Islamic Museum, Dahlem, West Berlin; Dr. Esin Atıl, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; Peggy Loar and Anne Gosset, Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Service; Cornelius Howard, Irish Embassy, Washington D.C.; Dr. Dieter George of the Oriental Department, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, West Berlin; Ray Desmond, The India Office Library and Records, London; Dr. Filiz Cagman and Dr. Zeren Tanindri, Topkapı Saray Museum Library, Istanbul and Anna Muthesis.

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Introduction:

John Carswell

In 1925 the German scholar Bernhard Moritz offered for sale to James Henry Breasted, the founder of the Oriental Institute, a collection of miscellaneous antiquities, Arabic manuscripts and other objects, acquired by him when he lived and travelled in the Near East before the First World War.

Bernhard Moritz, Orientalist and Arabic scholar, was born on September 13th, 1859 in Guben, Germany. A student at the University of Berlin, he received his Dr. phil. in 1882, and travelled between 1883 and 1885 in the Near East to gain first-hand knowledge of the Arab world. For a short while he was assistant in the Egyptian department of the Berlin Museum, and took part in Koldewey’s Babylonian excavations at Zorghul and Hiba. He then taught Arabic at the Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin (founded by Bismarck in 1887), and travelled to Egypt in 1891, and Morocco in 1893. His first important work was the publication of a corpus of Arabic inscriptions from Oman and Zanzibar, Sammlung arabischer Schriftstücke aus Zanzibar und Oman (Stuttgart & Berlin, 1892).

In 1896 Moritz was appointed head of the Khedivial Library in Cairo, a post he held until 1911. Taking advantage of his situation he travelled widely, making geographical and historical studies of the area. Among his discoveries was an 8th century A.D. Arabic inscription on the walls of Kasr Kharina, important evidence for the dating of this structure to the early Islamic period. But his most outstanding contribution was his monumental study, Arabische Paläographie (Cairo, 1905) illustrated with facsimiles of many important manuscripts in the Khedivial Library.

In 1911 his sojourn in Egypt came to an end and he returned to Berlin, to a new appointment as Director of the Library of the Seminar for Oriental Languages. He remained in this post until he retired in 1924 at the age of sixty-five. Moritz’s interest in the Near East extended to modern times and he was actively interested in contemporary events. During the First World War he published a short study Wie Ägypten englisch wurde (Weimar, 1915) which discussed British attitudes towards the Egyptians, and the Arab world. After his retirement he accepted a post in the Foreign Office, putting his talents as an Arabist to work, translating documents and disseminating information about Germany in the Near East.

Intellecually he was first and foremost an Arabic scholar, but he was also interested in comparative philology and made a special study of foreign words in Aramaic. He also wrote about Turkish history, in particular the relations between Turkey and Venice at the time of Selim I. His work on the physical and historical geography of Arabia, Arabien...
A second pupil of Martin Sprengling, Gulnar Kheirallah Bosch, made the study of the Moritz bookbindings the subject of her doctoral thesis, *Islamic Bookbindings: Twelfth to Seventeenth centuries*, which was completed in 1952. Since then the bindings aroused no special interest, and when in 1957 was appointed curator of the Oriental Institute Museum in 1977, they were put out to me during a tour of the basement languishing on the top of a cupboard. This first encounter led to the collaboration of Gulnar Bosch, Guy Petherbridge and myself, and the preparation of the present exhibition and catalogue.

In the course of our investigation of the bookbindings we discovered that the Oriental Institute did not possess all of the Moritz collection, which had been divided at an early stage. The Islamic Museum in East Berlin possesses fifty-six Moritz bindings, and the Islamic Museum at Dahlem in West Berlin a further four fine examples. Besides these the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin owns sixty-three Moritz bindings. The Chester Beatty archives also supplied the information, from F.R. Martin in 1929, that the bindings were in fact the remains of books which Moritz had had rebound, and that the texts from two of the bindings, from the Agia Sophia Library in Istanbul, had been taken to the Yildiz Palace twenty-five years before and rebound in red velvet.

Besides the Moritz bindings now in museum collections, a collection of thirty bindings in the possession of Carlo Alberto Chierna in Milan are almost certainly from the original Moritz group. At least five covers in the Chiesa collection consist of only half a binding, the other halves being in East Berlin (one), Chester Beatty (two) and the Oriental Institute (two). Whether or not Moritz dismembered them we do not know. But one of Chiesa's bindings is illustrated by Tammaro De Marinis in his entry 'Legatura' in *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* (Rome, 1933-42). De Marinis, besides being a noted scholar of Italian bookbinding, was also a Florentine bookseller, and he may well have acted as an intermediary in the disposal of the Moritz collection. It should be noted that the Chiesa and Chester Beatty bindings have the same sort of leather repairs and are housed in similar mounts, and both sets have had many of the pasteboards and doublures removed.

Whatever the actual history of the acquisition of the bookbindings by Moritz, and the subsequent dispersal of the collection, the present study has provided the opportunity to reconstruct its scope, and to examine in detail Moritz's extraordinary collection of material. Not least important for this study is the fact that the Moritz collection when it came to Chicago also contained not one, but two copies of a rare 11th century A.D. treatise on Islamic bookbinding by Tamin ibn al-Morvizi ibn Badiis, *Umdat al-a'zam wa'uddat al-sham al-albaha* (The Staff of the Scribes and Implements of the Discerning): one of these copies was made at the instigation of Moritz himself from an original version in the Khedivial Library in Cairo. Thus we have not only the book covers themselves, but the additional advantage of first-hand information about the techniques that were used by Islamic craftsmen to make them.
Islamic Bookmaking:
The Historical Setting

Gulnar Bosch

Detailed information bearing on Islamic bookbinding is scattered in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources and is therefore not easily accessible to the English reader. Relative datings and stylistic groupings of Islamic bookbindings have received a great deal of attention from Western scholars; but the relations between the bookbinder and the booktrade, the varied influences promoting the production itself with regional modifications in process and style, have been less generally known.

Therefore it was thought desirable to consider, with the aid of new sources and materials, the historical, technical, and stylistic aspects of Islamic bookbindings, with the stress on those produced between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries.

Interest in Islamic bookbinding is not new; but the Western student and connoisseur of Islamic art feels that the bindings merit attention for their own sake, even though their contents have been lost, while the Arab proverb says, "For the sake of the book the binding is loved."14

Western interest in Islamic bookbinding has grown since 1890 when Paul Adam included them in his general history of bookbinding and its technique.2 Adam’s significant articles, based on personal acquaintance with the craft, have followed developments of investigation in the Islamic field.3 Succeeding scholars who pioneered in studying and publishing Islamic bindings were Hendley,4 Migeon,1 Sarre,5 Martin,6 Gottlieb,5 Louvier,7 Ischer,8 Karabacak,9 and Miguel y Planes.10

There was a dearth of interest caused by the first World War, until 1923 when Sarre11 and Grazi14 published extensive monographs on Islamic bookbindings. Sarre’s purpose was two-fold: to provide facsimile illustrations to aid further study of the material and to characterize the two main divisions, Egyptian and Persian-Turkish, pointing out their peculiarities. Grazi’s monograph added further subdivisions, Maghribi (North African) and South Arabian. A single binding from Java of the second quarter of the nineteenth century is added. He also aimed through paleographical and library accession indications to arrive at closer relative datings. The third major contribution was Grohmann and Arnold’s The Islamic Book.12 Grohmann contributed a scholarly historical treatment of the early developments of the Islamic book which, with the stylistic analyses of the early bindings, emphasized the Coptic contribution, while Arnold summarized briefly the Persian-Turkish accomplishments in bookbinding.

The latter field was more thoroughly investigated by Sakisian in several articles.13 Within the same decade (1930-1940) followed the works of