
261. J. Karabacek (1913), CLXVII, 40.

262. Masabhih is an Arabic word from the root su-bih, and is a participle of the second form. Vegetation is inlaid in this word with growth and the fine connected vegetable growth of the filigree pattern is aptly described by this word. Lute, Arabic-English Lexicon, 1, p. 273. Cf. also Bibeiram-Kazimirski, Dictionnaire arabe-français, II, p. 1179.


264. Mustafi Ali, Menaghi-i-Husseeniya, p. 74, l. 1. Hobson feels the Persians avoided themselves in the virtuosity of the technique, but gives the Egyptians priority in the technique. G. D. Holton, “Some Early Bindings and Binders’ Tools,” The Library, Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, XIX, 1938-1939, p. 211. Karabacek also demonstrates that although the cutting-out of leather and paper is not specifically Persian, it reached its highest point there. He discovered an early example of Persian sfilage of 829 H./1421 A.D. and was able to identify the embossment as a certain Jald al-Quzni. J. Karabacek (1913), pp. 48, 59-60.


267. Starch size as a dressing for paper was in general use on Chinese papers shortly after the seventh century according to microscopic examination. J. W. Wissner, “Über die ältesten bis jetzt aufgefundene Hademophone,” Vienei-Kai, Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, CLXVII, 1913, Abhandlung 5, 13. Naghel, or wheat-starch, was used as a size on a paper, dated 428/1036, which is still preserved. J. Karabacek (1917), Plate III, Fig. 5, p. 32. The Arabs also early used coloring matter in the flocking of starch paste. J. Karabacek (1894), p. xvi.


269. The paper was strong enough to be split where a border of one type and an inner field of another is desired. A modern Persian craftsman says great skill is required for this operation, and the work is entrusted to the bookbinders. T. Behrod, “Book Painting: Miniaturist’s Materials,” in A. U. Pope (ed.), Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present, London & New York, 1939, III, p. 1926.


272. An early binding described as gold-tooled (ca. 694/1256) has been published. P. Ricard, “Reliéres musulmanes du XIIIe siècle: Notes sur des spécimens d’époque et de tradition almohades,” Hospèrié, Vol. XVI, 1933, Plate I. Some early Islamic manuscripts had ornamental of gold leaf pasted on the paper. T. W. Arnold and A. Grohmann (1926), pp. 47 ff. Gold and silver writing had been adopted from previous cultures.

273. There are four preparations for the solution of gold in the Compositions of Tenginga, while the earlier Greek papyrius of Leyden had no less than sixteen, and one recipe is identical in both manuscripts being used not only for writing on parchment but also on glass and marble. It calls for calcined, fresh, clear resin, gum the color of gold, brilliant orpiment, bile of turtle, white of egg and saffron of Sicily, M. Bredif (1891), I, p. 17. For gold in suspension the Magnes Chrysopras, of the 10th century, used powdered gold with bile of bull, etc. It also contained a recipe substituting other ingredients for gold in “gold” ink. Ibid., pp. 46-49. Nadim, Floris, pp. 6, 40. N. Abbott (1899), p. 54, for use of gold in writing. S. Zeydi is the Persian word for cinna-

274.ment, red lead, sandax and burnt cerouse. Steinhaus, Persian-English Dictionary, p. 57.


The Catalogue

The catalogue entries have been arranged, not according to strict geographical groupings or chronological evolution, but in a sequence relating to their place in the four major design schemes used in Islamic leather bookcovers as proposed by Bosch (1952), pp. 160-169:

1) A central pattern fills the entire inner panel. The central element of the design does not really repeat itself, although quarter portions of it may be suggested in the corners of the panel. The inner panel is contained by one or more frames. (1-25)

2) An overall pattern with repeats fills the inner panel. This is surrounded with single or multiple frames, one of which may also contain overall filling. (24, 25)

3) A medallion or other centre-piece motif is placed at the centre of an untooled inner panel field, defined by one or more frames. The corners of the inner panel may be decorated, as may be other areas, particularly above and below the central motif in the vertical axis. (26-68, 72-91)

4) As for design scheme (3), but the field of the inner panel around the central motif and other decorated areas is filled with an overall pattern. (69-71)

Catalogue entries 92-94 are manuscripts whose exterior coverings are of materials other than leather. Entries 95-100 are items of particular codicological interest.

A small number of bookbindings in this catalogue were not collected by Moritz but have been included to provide examples of styles of Islamic bookbindings which have either been neglected in the published literature or inadequately presented. No attempt has been made to include examples of extensively published styles not represented in the Moritz collection.

In describing the tooling, the calyx terminology is taken from Farid Shalbi’s, “Simple Calyx Ornament in Islamic Art: A Study in Arabicess,” Cairo, 1956. Tooling is in blind unless otherwise indicated. The term ‘vertical axis’ refers to decorative elements which run in the direction parallel to the fore-edge and spine of the bookcover, and the term ‘horizontal axis’ to those which run parallel to its head and tail. The dimensions given are those of the uppercover covers which are related to the paper format and thus may be more useful than the overall measurements of each complete object. The heights only are given of separate fore-edge and envelope flaps. The authors were unable to note the leather types, dimensions and some particularities of tooling of those bookbindings in the Islamic Museum, East Berlin. All Chester Beatty bookcovers and fragments from which the pasteboards and doublures have been removed have had their edges trimmed before they were mounted and it is these dimensions which are given. In 1970-80 the Milanese antiquarian bookseller, C. A. Chiessa offered for sale a collection of Islamic bookcovers of a provenance closely related to those of the Moritz collection now dispersed between Berlin, Dublin and Chicago. Some of these covers are referred to in the appropriate catalogue entries by the number given in the Chiessa catalogue.
The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; exterior covering brown leather (goat) over paper pasteboards; blind tooling with gold paint; double-light brown leather (sheep).

280mm x 197mm
Oriental Institute A12130 & A12131
Dr. B. Moritz
Meghrib, 13th-15th century A.D.

Upper and Lower Covers The upper and lower covers of this binding are similarly decorated. A burnished band edges a frame with a running pattern of impressions of a rectangular single-axis stamp depicting schematic lotus blossoms linked by scrolls. The cup-like base of each blossom is embossed by a symmetrical curved stem with bifurcated leaves at each end. The inside edge of this border is defined by multiple fillets with adjacent tripartite fillets bordering the inner panel. An extra tripartite fillet edges the fore-edge and spine sides of the panel.

The inner panel is occupied by a geometric strapwork interface. The straps are of unwooded leather defined by single fillets and form a large central star linked to quadrant stars in the corners of the panel. Each compartment is filled with knotwork, that of the central star having at its core a small square area left untouche except for a central centred annular gold painted dot with smaller annular dots at its corners. The corner quarter-star compartments are centered by single large centred annular gold painted dots. This tool is also used to pick out the very small triangular compartments in the zone linking the star systems. The knotwork is constructed of hatched bars, arcs and dots.

G. Bosch, (1952), pp. 116, 149.

Only the exterior leather of this cover survives, the pasteboard and the doublure having been removed. It is edged by a broad burnished band within which is a border, defined on the outside by a single fillet and on the inside by a tripartite fillet, of rich prominent knotwork constructed of hatched bars, arcs and dots.

The inner panel is defined by a tripartite fillet and is occupied by a geometric strapwork interface of infinite extension. The straps are produced by two adjacently placed tripartite fillets. The interface encloses large twelve-pointed stars, one of which forms the centre of the panel and four others are cut by the frame to form corner quadrants. Their centres are filled with a diagonal network produced by hatched bars, arcs and centred annular dots. The interface extends beyond these stars to produce another zone of star points, whose compartments are filled with knotwork of hatched bars, arcs and centred annular dots. The compartments of the zones interconnecting the star systems are tooled as for the centres of the stars. On the vertical axis, in small inward pointing triangular compartments, midway between the periphery of the central star and the frame, are placed tiny circular epigraphical finely-engraved stamps. These read:

al-Masri (al-Asri, al-Nasri?)
'Yez al-Din (?)
Husayn (?)


3. Upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; exterior covering brown leather (goat) over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; double-light brown leather (sheep).

255mm x 155mm
Oriental Institute A12107
Dr. B. Moritz
Egypt/Syria, 13th-14th century A.D.
Upper and Lower Covers. Both covers are similarly decorated except for the knotwork at their very centre which differs in its geometry. A leather repair obscures the spine frame of the upper cover. The covers are edged with burnished bands framed by broad tripartite fillets which also define the inner edges of the frame. This is formed of impressions of a square format stamp depicting two interlaced hatched diagonal loops with interstitial dots.

The inner rectangular panel is filled with an overall blind strapwork interlace, of infinite extension, centered on a large twelve-pointed star. Although the strapwork is formed by double tripartite fillets, the central star, corner star quadrants and intervening pentagonal compartments are additionally outlined by a cushion border of untooled leather. The central star and corner quadrant stars are filled with a diagonal knotwork mesh. There is a gold dot at each point of the central star. On both covers there is a small square with central dot left at the centre of each quadrant star. This feature also appears in the centre of the main star of the upper cover but is missing from the corresponding star of the lower cover. This has such dots at the corners of an imaginary square within the field. The knotwork is formed using hatched bars, arcs and dots. The compartments formed by the painted extensions of the central star and corner star quadrants are filled with blind centred annular dots. The intervening pentagonal compartments, whose outlines are described above, are filled with a large knot with interstitial and flanking dots.

Doublure. Both upper and lower covers have doublures printed from the same block. A dense interweaving of vine spirals moves out from intervening dished lozenge-shaped areas along a single dominant axis (in this case placed parallel to the head and tail of the covers). The vines develop in their spiral path into pointed leaves, buds and possibly thorns which add to the thicket-like appearance of the pattern by overlapping in many places. Similar doublures appear on 4 and 10.
The upper and lower covers, fore-edge and envelope flaps of the original binding survive but the spine is a relatively recent European repair.

**Upper Cover** The upper and lower covers have similar borders and frames but interfaces of differing geometry for their inner panels. They are edged by a broad burnished band within which is a frame, defined by tripartite fillets, of a guilloche pattern produced by interlocking hatched X-shaped stamps with interstitial gold dots. Single centred annular gold dots are placed at the outer corners of the frame.

The inner panel is outlined by an untooled band, defined on the inner side by a fillet. In each corner of this band is placed a single centred annular gold dot. The panel is filled with a rectilinear geometrical strapwork composed of three major horizontal elements. The broad straps are defined by single fillets. The interface encloses at the centre a six-pointed star with, at its core, a single centred annular gold dot. The head and tail elements of the interface are cut horizontally by the frame. The background field is densely textured with hatched bars and arcs as well as short fillets and dots.

**Lower Cover** This has a border similar to that of the lower cover. Its inner panel is outlined in a similar way and has similar strapwork and infill tooling. The geometry, however, is different. The interface encloses at the centre a large twelve-pointed star, outlined with a broad tripartite fillet, within which is a roundel. This is also formed using a tripartite fillet. The points of the star have a motif like the eye of a peacock’s feather constructed of small circles with an eccentrically placed inner centred annular gold dot leaving an untooled inner crescent. These are flanked by small centred dots. The field within the roundel has a complex knotwork woven around a square centred annular gold dot. The strapwork interface extends beyond the central star to link with corners of the lower cover. The field of the compartments are of knotwork based on squares with a central centred annular gold dot.

**Fore-edge Flap** The fore-edge flap is edged by a burnished band and broad tripartite fillets define tooled orthogonal panels of equal size. Those at head and tail are filled with plaitwork of hatched bars, arcs and gold dots around simple single fillet cross forms. The middle panel is tooled with interlinked knotwork squares centred by central annular gold dots.

**Envelope Flap** The border and frame of the envelope flap at head, tail and fore-edge are similar to those of the corresponding areas of the upper and lower covers. Within is an untooled band (with corner centred annular gold dots) like that defining the inner panel of the upper and lower covers. This demarcates the main pointed panel of the flap. At its centre is a roundel with an exterior circular untooled band defined by a single fillet. Within is a circular tripartite fillet. Eccentrically placed along this on the horizontal axis on the side away from the point of the flap is a small medallion of knotwork centred around a central annular gold dot. The design of this roundel, as a whole, echoes the form of the peacock eye motifs in the points of the central star of the lower cover. The field of the main panel of the envelope flap surrounding the roundel is filled with a knotwork mesh against which are placed knotted lозenges whose braiding is left untooled. Gold dots are placed at its interstices.

**Doublures** Upper cover, lower cover, fore-edge flap and envelope flap have the same block-pressed leather doublures with a pattern in which a dense interwoven of vine spirals moves out from intermediate dished lozenge-shaped areas along a dominant axis (in this case parallel to the head and tail of the covers). The vines develop in their spiral path into pointed leaves, buds and possibly horns which add to the thicker-like appearance of the pattern by overlapping in many places. Similar doublures appear on 3 and 10.

**A Bookcover:** Exterior covering brown leather (goat) over paper pastebords; blind tooling, gold tooling; doublures block-pressed leather (sheep). 259mm × 175mm Chester Beatty Library Moritz Collection 04 Dr. B. Moritz Egypt/Syria, 14th–15th century A.D.

**Upper and Lower Covers** Both upper and lower covers are similarly deco-
rated. A broad burnished band, defined by fillets, edges an untooled band. Within, a frame, divided at its horizontal and vertical axes by simple meanders formed by short fillets and gold dots into four L-shaped compartments, is filled with knotwork squares constructed of hatched bars and arcs around central annular gold dots. The frame is defined on the inside by an untooled band with a single fillet along one side and a double row of tripartite fillets outlining the rectangular inner panel. This panel is filled with a strapwork geometrical interlace of infinite extension within which juxtaposed interlinked dodecagram systems enclose twelve-pointed stars. One of these forms the centre of the panel and four others are cut by the frame into corner quadrants. The star centres and the compartments outside the dodecagrams have a knotwork mesh of hatched bars, arcs and interstitial gold dots. The compartments which constitute the arms of the dodecagrams have related knotwork but with blind dots except for single centrally placed annular gold dots.

Spine The spine is untooled and is a later repair, but from the presence of adhesive and other accumulations on the inside it appears to have been actually used as part of a later binding phase.

Fore-edge Flap The fore-edge flap has tooling at head and tail similar to that of the frames of the upper and lower covers and a similar burnished edging band. Within these framing elements is a long panel outlined with tripartite fillets. It has a very distinctive criss-cross pattern of linked lozenges with pointed ties at their intersections. The strapwork of the interface of the upper and lower covers is formed of untooled straps defined by fillets. A central annular gold dot is dotted at the points of the lozenges. Though this panel is markedly different in the major features of its design from that of the upper and lower covers, some continuity is provided by a horizontal fillet through the centre criss-cross tie which creates a visual link with the meanders horizontally cutting the frames of the upper and lower covers. The compartments within and without the lozenges are filled with knotwork of hatched bars, arcs and dots.

Envelope Flap The envelope flap is edged with an outer band burnished band defined by fillets within which is a band of untooled leather of equal width defined by fillets. The point of this envelope flap is not stressed by an individual motif, but rather the whole field is filled with an overall pattern of simple crosses centred by gold dots in a knotwork mesh.

Doubliure The doubliure is related to those of 11 cover B, and 38. It is of block-pressed leather with a symmetrical pattern whose module is based on a central cross with arrow-shaped calyx arms arising from a central dot. The arrow-shaped points develop into a larger three-sepulchred calyx whose outer arms curve downwards. These serve as the core from which leaves develop into expanding vine scroll forms with varied foliate forms and calyces. Bilobed leaves frequently emphasize the tying elements.


6 A cover of a bookbinding: exterior covering brown leather over paper pasteboards; blind tooling; gold tooling; doubliure block-pressed leather.

Islamic Museum East Berlin 1365
Dr. B. Morris
Maghreb, 14th century A.D.

The outer frame of this cover, defined by tripartite fillets, has a pattern in which the diagonal elements are prominent, formed by hatched X-shaped stamps with interstitial dots placed so that their arms align. This tooling has been executed so as to leave a central row of untooled eight-pointed stars or diamonds centred by a central annular gold dot.

Within this outer frame at head and tail, tripartite fillets demarcate panels tooled with a simple row of the hatched X-shaped stamps. The rectangular inner panel lies within an untooled inner frame. It has a geometrical strapwork interlace of linked octagons with central eight-pointed stars. The straps are of untooled leather edged by single fillets. The outlines of the stars are emphasized by tripartite fillets and their centres are left untooled. The small pointed compartments in the zone beyond the central stars are tooled with clusters of three gold dots. The other compartments are filled with hatched X-shaped tools and dots. The very small corner compartments are secured by groups of four gold dots.

Doubliure The block-pressed leather doubliure has a pattern made up of a relatively small biaxial repeat of leafy vine scrolls and calyces around a central four-lobe or four-joined form.
The lower cover of a bookbinding, exterior covering brown leather (goat) over paper pasteboards; doublure block-pressed leather (goat); blind and gold tooling. 244mm x 183mm. Oriental Institute A12127
Dr. B. Motitz, Egypt/Syria, 14th-15th century A.D.

Lower Cover Crude repairs obscure the tooling of the borders of this cover. It has a running pattern composed of impressions of a square format two-axis tool with hatched half-hexagons on each side, which has a square central compartment enclosing a small central circle. The border is defined on its inner edge by a tripartite fillet. An adjacent tripartite fillet defines the inner panel. The inner panel is occupied by a geometric interlace of infinite extension formed by tripartite fillets. The interlace produces doublure systems, with central twelve-pointed stars, linked by irregular heptagons and hexagons. This panel has a central such system and quadrant systems at the corners. The inner twelve-pointed stars and corner sections of stars are additionally outlined by tripartite fillets and have inner fields of hatched X-shaped stamps with interstitial gold dots. The points of the star zone immediately encircling the inner stars are untooled. The arms of the doublures are filled with impressions of a six-loped rosette tool and centred by a central gold dot. The small polygonal compartments connecting the outer zone of the doublures to the heptagons and hexagons are untooled. Those linking six- and seven-sided forms are tooled with sketchy whirling forms of flocks and dots around a central gold dot core.

Like the inner stars, these compartments have additional outlining tripartite fillets. Those separating them in the zone linking the doublure systems are filled with gold dots. Above and below the central doublure on the vertical axis are two small compartments linking a group of three of the hexagons/heptagons. These are untooled except for a central centred gold dot.

Doublure The block-pressed doublure has a floral pattern of which the module is dominated by a large eight-loped form whose outline is produced by the meeting of pointed tripartite leaves or three-sepalled split calices. This octolobe is approximately square in proportions. At its centre is an eight-petalled star of cross shape with each arm of the cross having two points. It contains a chrysanthemum-like sixteen-petalled flower with alternating slender and short petals. The points of the central cross/star extend to produce four large lobes filling the lobes in the vertical and horizontal axes. The less prominent corner lobes are occupied by peony-like flowers. The corners of the large octolobe motifs join intervening eight-petalled forms produced by the interlacing of two cross-shaped four-loped forms containing a central chrysanthemum-like flower. From the petals of the quadrilobe in the horizontal and vertical axes develop leafy plant sprays which fill the remaining spaces between the dominant octolobe motifs of the module.

This doublure is very similar to that of 46.

G. Boas, (1952), pp. 132, 135, 162; pl. 11.

A round manuscript; Arabic; donated by Sultan Farah, 801 A.H./1399 A.D.—815 A.H./1413 A.D. Textblock: paper burntish Oriental, hand-made; endleaves burntish European hand-made laid watermark. Ink stitch sewn at two sewing stations with blue cotton thread; Islamic endbands; thin gold leaved; European endleaves; resewing to head and tail spines and repairs to edges of leaves (of Oriental paper textblock and European endleaves) as well as hinges attaching textblock to covers, all using a lighter coloured laid paper; exterior covering of brown leather over paper pasteboards; later leather replacements for spine and foredge; blind tooling, gold tooling, gold paint.

184mm x 127mm. Oriental Institute A12066
Dr. B. Motitz, Egypt, early 15th century A.D.

Although this volume has undergone one or two phases of repair and renewing, the upper and lower covers and envelope flap are original to the manuscript.

Upper and Lower Covers Both upper and lower covers are similarly tooled. A burntish hand edges a frame, defined by thin tripartite fillets on the