This magnificently produced volume covers in detail the art of binding books and their sumptuous decoration as practised in the Islamic world. This work discusses the history of the Islamic book, its development and the wide variety of decorative techniques used. The objects range in period from about 1400 C.E. to 1900 C.E. and cover the areas of North Africa, Egypt and Syria, South Arabia, Persia, Ottoman Turkey and Mughal India. There are also details and illustrations of the tools and stencils used in the making of the binding patterns. All objects illustrated are reproduced in superb detail, many in colour, and a full description is given of each item. In addition, the introduction provides an invaluable background to the collection and describes how the various items relate to each other in style, technique, etc.

There is no other comparable publication and the collection has not been published before, except in a few individual cases.

A comprehensive bibliography is included and the book is a worthy tribute to its outstanding Islamic precursors.

This is a volume both for the specialist and the connoisseur as well as for anyone interested in books and their development.
Duncan Haldane, MA, PhD, was educated at the Edinburgh Academy and the University of Edinburgh where he read Arabic with English Literature. He subsequently completed a doctorate on a group of Arab manuscripts which entailed study in many libraries throughout Europe and the Middle East. This thesis was published in 1978 as a book entitled *Mamluk Painting*.

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ISLAMIC BOOKBINDINGS
in the Victoria and Albert Museum
Duncan Haldane

World of Islam Festival Trust
in association with
The Victoria and Albert Museum
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Duncan Haldane
London, 1983
PREFACE

Like so many of the Victoria and Albert Museum’s acquisitions, this magnificent collection of Islamic bookbindings was built up by some very discerning collectors in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. Indeed no less than ninety-nine bindings, some still attached to very fine manuscripts came into the Museum’s possession during those two and a half decades.

Some of the most outstanding examples of Persian and Ottoman Turkish workmanship were bought during that period and at a time when little study had been undertaken of this particular aspect of Islamic book technique, they bear witness to the taste and discerning eye of many of the Museum’s benefactors. Among them was Major-General Sir Robert Murdoch Smith. He was Director of the Russian Telegraph Department at Tehran for twenty years and while in Persia purchased a large number of Persian objects of art for the South Kensington Museum, as the Victoria and Albert Museum was then called. In 1885 on his retirement, he became Director of the Science and Art Museum in Edinburgh (now the Royal Scottish Museum) which also benefited from his collections. Another benefactor was Sidney Churchill. He was Secretary to Murdoch Smith in Persia and later became British Consul-General in Palermo and Naples. During his long career abroad he assembled a large and varied library including many outstanding Islamic works.

Since the turn of the century an irregular but continuing number of Islamic book covers has been acquired by the Museum and two years ago the National Art Library was very fortunate to buy a collection of thirty-nine, predominantly Arab, book covers which had once been in the possession of the late Dr Bernhard Moritz. Other parts of the collection of this noted German Orientalist, who spent fifteen years in Cairo as head of the Kedivial Library, are now in the two Islamic Museums in Berlin, the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin and the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. This group of book covers is of great importance for any study of the styles of decoration and the use of vegetal motifs in Arab book ornamentation. In 1981 twelve Arab and Persian bindings were bought which had formerly been in the collection of the Hapog Keworkian Fund and these are especially valuable in adding to our knowledge of different techniques and decoration. Earlier this year a fine Ottoman book cover which had once been in the possession of the great Orientalist, Dr F R Martin, was bought by the Library and this acquisition considerably enhanced the Turkish section of bindings.

The majority of bindings in the Museum’s possession are loose covers which in part is a reflection on the different sewing techniques used in the Islamic world which often led to the binding coming apart from the text block. In some cases glue was used to attach the binding to the spine of the book which was even less secure. Some of the bindings were acquired as a single group, such as the thirty-five Arab covers bearing the inventory number 560–1888. It is interesting to note that these were bought in Egypt for fourteen pounds sterling! Incidentally some of the attributions, particularly those given to some of the Arab collection, were made by Dr Moritz during a visit to London in 1910 and in many cases these attributions need no alteration. There are also some bindings still attached to their original manuscripts. If the manuscript retains its colophon, this enables a known date and location to be given to a particular
style. This is of enormous importance in a field such as Islamic art where styles and motifs are repeated not only over a very wide geographical area but also over much longer periods of time than is generally found in Western decorative arts. As a rule, this is a reflection of the comparatively static nature of Islamic decoration which was used in repeated motifs often with only minor variations. This is the same time both of the attractions as well as one of the drawbacks of Islamic art. Where a binding is still attached to a manuscript only salient details of the manuscript have been included in the catalogue section since many of these works require much fuller treatment than can or should be given in a book devoted to the art of binding. However, if there are points of calligraphic value or miniature paintings of any significance, this has been noted. A precise provenance and date is always given where possible.

Lastly it should be pointed out that the bookbindings have been arranged in four main groups: Arab, Persian, Turkish and Indian. Within each of these groups the bindings have been placed in chronological order though this has inevitably entailed somewhat arbitrary decisions when a work can only be described in general terms as a sixteenth or seventeenth century example. Within these broad chronological groupings an attempt has been made to arrange the bindings stylistically. A full list of all the bindings with their inventory numbers is also given, the last part of each inventory number being the year of accession by the Museum. It should also be noted that all the bindings are in the National Art Library except for those few marked with ID which are in Indian Department. All the designs and stencil patterns (part of the F.R. Martin Bequest) prefixed with an E are in Prints and Drawings Department.

INTRODUCTION

The art of binding and protecting scrips is as old as writing itself. Even the Assyrian inscriptions on clay tablets needed protective covers but book covers in their present form as we know them in the West date only from the early Christian period.

In the ancient world books existed only in the form either of rolls of varying lengths or of tablets. In neither case was there any pagination nor any easy means of reference to the text and it has to be remembered that some ancient Egyptian scrolls could reach a length of up to twenty feet. Even of a lesser length, rolls were very inconvenient to read, though admittedly less so if folded in a zigzag manner, as practised by the Chinese. Therefore it was to answer the need both for convenience and protection that led to the development of the codex, or bound book, in the form we know today of pages bound together at the spine between board covers.

The earliest codices were Coptic versions of the Gospels. These were written in Egypt during the first six centuries AD and were made of papyrus sheets with a cover composed of layers of papyrus covered with leather. Leather thongs were used to close the book.

Turning to the Islamic world, the bound book, or baq'af in Arabic (plural, maqalaq), was known in early Islamic history. Indeed it is traditionally said that during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (died 632 AD), Qur'an pages were kept between two wooden boards (lauhahin) and before the end of the seventh century AD 'Abd al-Malik ruled that it is necessary to point out the special and pivotal nature of the Qur'an in the daily lives of Muslims. The Qur'an, which consists of the collected revelations to Muhammad is not only a book of spiritual guidance but is also a code to social behaviour and a guide to civil laws. Accordingly Islamic book production as a whole, and the book arts including binding in particular, have a significance which has placed them in a category separate from other Islamic decorative arts. The famous Arab philologist and prose-writer al-Jahizi (who died in 886 AD) writes in his Praise of Books: 'The Persians left as their heritage their architecture, building cities and fortresses like those of Ardashir, Istahlah and Maddan. The Arab shared with the Persians in architecture but specialized in writing anecdotes and poetry... the composing of books is more effective than building in recording the accomplishments of the passing ages and centuries. For there is no doubt that construction eventually perishes, and its traces disappear, while books handed from one generation to another, and from nation to nation, remain ever renewed. And their reading is more enlivening as a resume of the period than architecture and painting... we are not for the wisdom garnered in books most of the learning would have been lost. The power of forgetfulness would have triumphed over the power of memory.'

The same author says that the Abyssinians claimed the credit for having introduced the codex to the Arabs. Be that as it may, it appears to be the case that the Persians, who defeated the Abyssinians who were occupying South Arabia in 'The Year of the Elephants' (traditionally put at about 570 AD), did a great deal to develop the leather and tanning trade in the Yemen at the south-
western corner of Arabia. For example, it is recorded that the Persians constructed tanneries in every town that they built and in the present Yemeni capital, Sana'a, there were apparently as many as thirty-three tanneries in operation in 991 AD. While in the south of the country it was reputed to produce excellent bindings and Zabid, also in the Yemen, was famous for its book leather. Tanning works in Sana'a in the north of the same country are mentioned by al-Haruni and the beginning of the thirteenth century AD also saw a flourishing leather trade in Egypt. During the Mamluk period (1290-1517) in Egypt was to be the source of some of the finest Arab bindings ever produced. Tanning works are also known to have existed during the Islamic Empire both to the west in Spain and to the Maghrib (i.e. present-day North Africa, particularly Morocco) and to the East in Bukhârî. Knowledge of tanned and dyed leather is additionally reflected in some sixth and seventh century Arabic poetry. All this therefore points to a long and established tradition of book binding in the countries of the Islamic world. Despite the fact that bound books were very expensive, papermakers, binders and book sellers apparently flourished, particularly during the Golden Age of the Caliphate (750-1258 AD). 6 In 985 AD the geographer and bookbinder, al-Muqaddasi, received two dinars for binding a Qurʾān in the Yemen and very high prices are known to have been paid for bound literary copies, especially those copies which were autographed by the author. A gold dinar seems to have been the average price for a better quality work. But although there was obviously so much activity in this field, very little has unfortunately survived in the way of bibliographical treasures. Libraries which once had rich collections (the library at Cordova, for example, is said to have contained two hundred and fifty thousand books alone) were destroyed either through malice or carelessness. The library of the religiously unorthodox fitâhâdîs at Câiro was sacked at a time of general disorder in 1008 AD and some of the bindings were used to make shoes for negro slaves. This library had previously been mutilated from attacks by Christians and Arabs alike. 7 The library at Tripoli (in the Lebanon) was reputed to contain three million books was put to the flames by the Crusaders and when the Mongols seized Bagdad in 1258 AD put an end to the rules of the Abbâsid they too burned the magnificent library there. The library of the Grand Master of the Assassins in Alamut burned in 1257 AD, as had done that in Medina twenty years previously. This last fire was apparently due to the carelessness of a religiously lighted candle. In addition to the great royal libraries such as those of the Abbâsid Caliph at Madînâ (reigned in Bagdad 813–35), the Hâkim of Spain (reigned 963–76) and the Fatîmid ruler al-Hâkim (reigned 996–1021), many wealthy private individuals assembled libraries and the frequent emphasis in texts on numerical estimates indicates that books were seen as outward evidence of culture and social status.

In contrast to the dearth of information on Islamic, and particularly Arab painters, we do know of a number of Arab binders who were mentioned as early as the tenth century AD. In 987 AD, for example, the following famous masters of the binders’ art were listed: Ibn Abî Hârîsh (who bound books in the library of the Caliph al-Mâmûn, 813–853 AD), Shâfi‘ al-Mîqâd al-Târifî, Abû ‘Uâd b. Shîrîn, Dimyânâ al-Âsir, Ibn al-Hâjîm, al-Husayn b. al-Safî. 8 This record of binders was continued in later periods of Islamic history. For instance, the fifteenth century Timurid period was well documented and several binders’ names are mentioned. Dîd Muhammad in Hâdîat al-Husnârvârin, a Persian account of calligraphers and painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, includes an account of Usâd Qâwîn al-Dîn of Tabriz to whom the invention of cut-paper work is attributed. And in a discussion of the royal library of Shah Tahmîsî, Dîd Muhammad refers to the binders’ guilds, Ka‘b al-Dîn and Abî al-Walîdî. We also know of a number of Turkish binders. At the time of Sultan Selim I (The Grim), 1512–1522, Mahmûd Çelebi was chief bookbinder with various families assisting as craftsmen, including Mahîmand’s younger brother Husayn and his son Sulaymân. We also know from Huard that Hajî Sa‘îd Efendi (who died in 1699/70) repaired Qur’âns at Medîna and that his preparation of boards for binding was excellent in form and execution. In the nineteenth century Tawfîk Efendi, a pupil of Hajî Husayn, was sent to the Universal Exhibition at Paris in 1867 where his works and bookbinding designs aroused great surprise and admiration. Eminent Turkish binders of the eighteenth century include Kâmil and Şerif Âkîlî and Ahmânezî. 9 All this adds up to an indication of the high standing which such craftsmen held in the society of their day. However, unfortunately there are few bindings with signatures in existence and 88–1880 (plate 2) is a rare and early example of such a type. In this case the name is difficult to decipher but the binding shown in plate 72 and its companion red kid, both have roundels in the corner pieces in which is clearly stamped 'Amâl Âmirî or 'The work of Amîrî'. This may be the same craftsman as that noted by Bosch in her description of three Islamic book covers in The collection of the Oriental Institute, Chicago, particularly since the overall design and date appear to be very close. 10

COPTIC AND EARLY ISLAMIC BINDINGS

Following the Arab conquest of Egypt in the mid-seventh century, it is not surprising that a number of early Islamic bindings bear relation in technique and, to a lesser extent form, to their Coptic predecessors, whose leather covers are decorated in a variety of styles. Some Coptic bindings, for example, have sewn leather appliqué work, others have incised work or inlaid freework, while repoussé work, punching, tooling and stamped work are all to be found. In Coptic bindings the centre panels are most commonly filled with a diagonal cross as well as with small rounded ornaments in the shape of stars, rings, quadrfoils and less usually with animals and birds. There is, however, a Coptic Homilies of St Charistomus and Eucharius in the British Library (Or 5001) where the edge of the panel of the back cover is stamped with twelve figures of a horned animal, possibly an antelope. In the centre is a dove with four figures of a bird, possibly a pelican, stamped in circular bosses round it. This ornamentation resembles those sculptured on some Coptic sepulchral stelae, also in the British Museum. The diagonal cross can be clearly seen in the centre of the covers of a Coptic Psalter in the British Library (Or 5000). Both the covers of this Psalter are ornamented with eight-pointed stars with geometric designs in the middle. The sides of the covers and the spine contain small circular medallions which are stamped with figures of a goat, a long-horned sheep, an eagle, two horses and possibly a dove. The book was fastened by three leather straps which were tied across to metal rings fixed in the outer side. In addition there were two straps at the top and bottom of the book. Both these Coptic bindings are in reasonably good condition, probably largely due to the fact that they were only used until only in 1896; having been burned in a stone chest wrapped in the red goatskin strongly common found in Africa. They were almost certainly buried during one of the many persecutions experienced by the Copts. The Victoria and Albert Museum has eight fragments of Coptic bindings, five of which are blind-stamped goatskin covers which were originally stamped on papyrus papyrus leaves. These fragments also show the leather loops or thongs which, as already mentioned, were used for closing the book. One of the fragments has broken along the line of a punched circular decoration while another is painted with a gold guilloché decoration. These fragments are important in any understanding of the development of Islamic bookbindings. One of the fragments which is well preserved is blind-stamped and punched with a central design of the Cross. This is probably to be dated to the ninth century whereas the others mentioned were most likely made in the tenth century. Some of the early Islamic volumes used designs of tooling work, stamping and incised work but did not make use of leather appliqué work. Materials also varied. One of the earliest Islamic bookbindings still in existence is made of cedar-wood with a mosaic of ivory, bone and different coloured woods fastened on it and in part inlaid. 11 Cedar wood covered with leather was also sometimes used, as well as sometimes coated with varnish. The wooden cover itself had ornamentation directly on it. Many other early bindings were made of papyrus pasteboard with leather covers attached. In any comparison of early Islamic bindings with earlier Coptic leather bindings it should be borne in mind that the majority of the Coptic bindings were found in the ruins of monasteries, most of which were situated in remote sites along the edges of the deserts of Upper Egypt and the oasis of Fayyum (to the south-west of Cairo). The ornamentation of Coptic book-covers therefore was carried out in an isolated environment and consisted of copying tested and well-established Hellenistic patterns. This was quite the reverse in the case of the Islamic bookbinders, who working in large and culturally lively cities such as Cairo,
Alexandria and Qairawan (in present-day Tunisia) vied with one another in inventiveness and quality of design. And although Coptic and Classical bookbinding techniques were speedily adopted by the new Islamic conquerors, the latter soon showed that they were unsurpassed in developing new and highly original styles of tooled ornamentation. They rejected the Coptic and Graeco-Roman tradition of drawing square ornamented panels with narrow frieze panels above and below. Instead they developed designs of single oblong panels filled with twisted, plaited, all-over band ornament. And this departure from Coptic traditions was ultimately to lead Islamic bookbinding patterns to heights of great inventiveness and unrivalled elegance. The Coptic heritage, therefore, though very important from a technical point of view, played a lesser part in the development of style and decoration of Islamic binding.

THE ART OF BINDING

Before examining the different types of Islamic bindings, it is necessary to look at the technical side of binding and the tools used in the craft. This aspect of the art of the Islamic book is well documented in Islamic literature. Among the works on book making techniques for example, are the Nafis al-Furuzan or Preciosities of the Arts, composed between 1335 and 1342 by Muhammad b. Mahmid al-Amsal, the Yadda al-Khitab or Tools of the Scribe by Abü 'Abdalah b. Hasan Dābihlī, and the Musta' al-Sulism wa Majma' al-Fursan or Exposition of the Sciences and Compendium of the Arts by Wālid 'Alī (written 1645-6) which traces the methods of calligraphy, printing, painting and inking in a. A great deal of information is to be found in two Arab manuscripts in particular. The first is entitled 'Umda al-Khitab wa Yadda al-'Abid or Staff of the Scribes and Implements of the Discerner. The author is al-Muizz b. Badīs (1067-1161 AD), a royal patron of the arts who was born in al-Manṣūriyyāh near Qairawan of the North African Berber dynasty of the Zirids. A full translation of this work has been provided by Martin Lewy in his Medieval Arabic Bookbinding already referred to. The other manuscript is Siyās al-Safar al-Khitab wa Ball al-Dahab or The Art of Bookbinding and Gilding by Abū 1-Abdalāh Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Sulfiyān. This treatise was written at Fez in Morocco in 1619 AD by al-Sulfīyān who was a master binder and was translated and published by Prosper Ricard in Paris in 1925. In the twelfth chapter of the former manuscript Ibn Badīs discusses the art of binding books in leather and the use of different tools. On these he has this to say:

There are the slab, the whetstone, the parer, the knife, and the awl, the shears, the mallet, the needles, the cutter, the press, the screw press, the rulers, and the compasses.

Ibn Badīs proceeds to elaborate on the different tools and in one paragraph he explains that there are two types of needles, 'one that does the page sewing and one for binding the book. The one used for sewing should be perfect and thin in body. The one for bookbinding should be shorter and thicker.' Ibn Badīs differentiates between two types of presses. One has a cord which, he says, is the type used by the Iraqis as well as the people of Egypt and Khorasan (in north-east Persia). The other is the screw press which 'is called by the bookbinders and by the carpenters "Solomon's binders". This was used by the people of Iraq.' Ibn Badīs says that the length of the cord press should be related to the section to be tied. The book should be in the middle of the press and the cord should be of hair newly cut when it is twisted and 'with no odor save a good one?' Further on in the same chapter Ibn Badīs describes the tools for toothing:

These are the gouge, and the "breast" which is called "the breast of the falcon." There are also the ornament, the dot, the "excised", and the polisher which is called a dust. Then there is a fine polisher. There are different stamps. The dots for impressing will be mentioned in their place. This is the total of instruments.

In the second and later manuscript al-Sulfīyān describes how the leather for binding should be decorated.

You take the pared skin and smear it with strong glue on both sides. Then you place two unpared skins on it, smeared with glue on the inner side. Leave it until it dries. Apply on it a sheet of paper on which is marked with
ink any design which you wish to use. This is done by taking a sheet of thin paper, wetting it with your saliva, leaving it until the saliva is absorbed, and drying a little. Press that sketch, whatever is it you wish to draw—a design, an illustration, or anything else relating to the book—against your thumb and finger. Outline it with pen and ink until the design is visible. When you have glued it on the previously mentioned leather, and it has dried, follow the sketch and the impression of the described drawing with a needle like that of the blood leather. To decorate make the impression on moistened leather to reproduce the design. If there are any blank spots in the work, fill them in. Try other leather also until the work pleases you. In other words, this was a kind of tracing process and this is clearly illustrated by the folio of stencils and wide range of designs for bookbinding decoration which was presented to the Museum by the late Dr F.R. Martin (see figs. 7, 8, and 12). This process is of course not unique to Islam and is used today by Western bookbinders.

The ornamentation of Islamic bookcovers was done with a variety of tools. The basic design, particularly of Arab bindings, was laid out by means of a compass and ruler. These marked the outlines for blind tooling which, as far as can be ascertained, was done with simple tools applied cold on slightly dampened leather. There is a suggestion, in Ibn Khaldun, however, that heated tools may also have been used.18 The simpler the tool used, the simpler the line achieved but some tools were designed so as to leave the positive parts of the design standing out in relief against a sunken background. A number of the bindings in the Museum’s collection show the lines marked out by ruler and compass which served as the starting point for the decorative process (plate 93, detail). Stamps which produced a complete design appear to have been introduced by the Persians although at an earlier stage in Arab bindings one finds tools which were used to form areas such as border panels or frames as well as stamps to create complete corner-piece designs. These were known in Mamluk times and can be seen in 373-1885 (plate 22) or 10704-1869 (plate 18), for example. (See also figs. 9, 10, 11, 22). Panel stamps of an oval shape became very common in Islamic bookbindings from the sixteenth century onwards. These were used to mark out the central motif on the cover and, if not a Persian innovation, were certainly widely used and their use developed by the Persians. It is what al-Sufyani calls turanj or citrus-shaped stamps. (fig. 15). Al-Sufyani describes the method of using such stamps. He says that the boards (or pasteboards, presumably) were hollowed out in the centre to the exact size and shape of the stamp. The leather was taped on to the board and the metal stamp was then placed on the area where the leather was depressed and gently hammered down or held down in a press. When the stamp was removed, a very clear impression was left on the leather.19 This method was still in use as recently as the 1920s, as Saadik has recorded.20 Some of the narrow repeating border designs were probably done by means of a roller.

While discussing technical points, it is to be noted that one of the greatest contributions made by Islamic binders to the craft in general was the invention of the flap or tabi which was attached to the rear cover and tucked under the front cover of the book over the outside edge of the pages, thus protecting them and keeping them free from dust. This became the hallmark of Islamic bindings and in some ways can be regarded as a forerunner of the clasps which was later to be used by Western binders. The dimensions of the flap were dictated by the size of the book but were usually one third of the width of the cover at top and bottom and it was cut off at a point which coincided with the centre of the binding. The other difference with Western bindings is that the edges of Islamic covers are always even with the pages and that the spine of the book is always flat without any raised bands. The leather most commonly used was goatskin. Herds of goats are reasonably widespread throughout the Islamic world and the only other common animal whose skin was fairly frequently used for bookbinding is the hair sheep. One example where the skin of the latter animal has been used is 89-1880 (plate 53). Some of the very white leather used such as that on the doublures shown in plate 115 is goatskin which has been tanned with alum. Incidentally the inlays of the previous binding referred to have also been treated in this way.

Alum tanning is the first mineral tannage attempted by man and consists ofimmersing the pelts in a solution of potash alum at a temperature of between 20 and 30°C. Alum is a double salt of aluminium and potassium sulphates and
(opposite)

Fig. 21. Persian brass stamp with floral pattern.
See Fig. 5.

Fig. 22. Small steel punch cast in the shape of a lozenge. Persian, mid-19th century.
ARAB BOOKBINDINGS

These can broadly be divided into three different categories: those from Egypt and Syria, those originating in North Africa or the Maghrib (i.e., literally 'the place where the sun sets'), and those from the Yemen and South Arabia. Although certain stylistic comparisons can be drawn which help in identifying the likely provenance, it is sometimes possible only to give a tentative attribution for want of definite evidence. Some scholars have also drawn attention to the international styles which prevailed in the early periods of Islamic history, which make attribution so difficult. The Victoria and Albert Museum has seventy-five different Arab covers and flaps, nearly all detached and all of which can be assigned to one of the above three categories with some degree of certainty. The collection includes twenty-four bindings formerly owned by Dr Bernhard Moritz.

In general, Arab bookcovers are much simpler, and have less elaborate tooled designs than those which were subsequently made in Persia and Turkey. There is usually no colour apart from gold and this simplicity of design, consisting in the main of geometric, knotwork and interlacing patterns is one of their very real charms. However, as happened in the other Islamic minor arts, an early straightforward vitality came to be replaced by more stylized and richer forms of decoration which were of course more in keeping with Ottoman and Persian courtly life. The art of Arab binding had by then served its usefulness and came to an end through too great an external splendour and a surfeit of the craft. The task of covering books with beautiful and suitable bindings was to fall to the Persians.

Among the finest Arab bindings in the Museum's collection are three very large Qur'an covers (see plates 18, 19, 20) which were made in fifteenth century Mamluk Egypt. The binding shown on plate 19 is of brown leather over pasteboard and is both blind tooled and gilded. It may, however, have undergone a certain amount of restoration, particularly in the renewal of some of the gold tooled details. Round the edge of the outside cover there is a border consisting of some of the ninety-nine names or attributes of Allah. These are written in a stylized form of Kufic script. The central section is composed of geometric interlacing patterns which are close to those found on woodwork of this period. The companion cover is made up of floral designs with a medallion and corner pieces and is edged with a border of knotwork ornament. This is a typical Mamluk binding, particularly in its style of geometric pattern. Other bindings (plates 2, 4, 5) use this or a similar form of decoration. The binding on plate 5 was almost certainly produced in mid-fifteenth century Egypt and shows well the technique of dot punching. That on plate 7 has a simpler geometric pattern and is probably to be assigned to the fourteenth century. It bears comparison with a binding in Istanbul which is from Syria and dated 1338. One must remember, however, that Syria and Egypt were one entity under the Mamlûks and that similar, if not identical styles of decoration were executed in Cairo as well as Damascus. This binding is of further interest since it has end-papers with textless designs. These appear to have been commonly used in Egyptian book decoration and a further binding on a manuscript in the Museum's collection (plate 1) contains good examples of these. The volume is a treatise on grammar entitled Al-Falâhil, is dated 1403 and the elaborate end-papers or doublures can be regarded as typical of this period. The colours are predominantly light browns and cream. The doublures are of thin leather with the repeating pattern block-pressed and these patterns may well have a connection with contemporary Islamic textile designs. Textiles printed from wooden blocks were made in Egypt from late Classical times and this printing on textiles continued into the Islamic era. Wooden blocks from the Mamlûk period have been found in Egypt and printing of this kind has continued to modern times there and in Syria. Arabic patterns were also used within roundels which formed the centre-piece of certain tooled cover designs. This can be seen in the bindings on plate 52 and 50. Both these bindings may well have been made in the Maghrib. Another cover, complete with spine and flap which is likely to have originated in the Maghrib, is shown on plate 53. This binding is made from sheepskin and may date from as early as the thirteenth century. It has a highly unusual design of intersecting diagonals with attached gilded roundels cut out of alum tanned sheepskin some of which are missing. The central designs in Arab book covers are of a very wide and interesting variety. In the Museum's collection alone there are covers with designs of eight-pointed stars (plate 7 and plate 8), almond-shaped medallions (plate 15), interlacing lines (plate 71), and intricate knotwork (plate 66), in addition to the roundels which have already been mentioned. The highly unusual knotwork design shown on plate 66 is very simply tooled with an outside border stamped with crosses and undulating lines. It could well come from the Maghrib but a thirteenth century South Arabian source may be just as likely. Without other comparable examples which can be definitely attributed to one source, it is impossible to be precise about the provenance. The other forms of decoration are not so uncommon. Indeed, in Leiden University Library there is a manuscript (Or 371) dated 1478 by Abd al-Rahman b. Ahmad b. Rajab al-Baghdadi which has an almost identical central design to the binding on plate 71 which should by extension be given a similar dating. The simple almond shape seen in plate 15 appears in Islamic bindings produced as early as 1211 in Syria and 1280 in Königsberg (both in Anatolia), Baghdad in 1287, Cairo in 1309 and 1392, Herat in 1429, and Istanbul in 1398. Thus the wide variety both of places and dates and its simple yet vital design testifies to the popularity of this motif.

A further example of differing central designs can be seen in plate 44. This cover probably dates from the thirteenth or fourteenth century and has a six-pointed star within a circle which is itself surrounded by a motif with cusped sides and elongated ends. It should be borne in mind that the six-pointed 'Star of David' was used extensively in tooled designs and that at that period in Islamic history did not have the immediate connotation of Jewry which it possesses today. The binding in plate 55 has an eight cusped medallion, but here the variety occurs in the corner pieces with their projections. Lastly an elaborate design of knotwork is used to embellish the binding in plate 67. This binding which has some similarities with that shown on plate 66 may well have been produced in fourteenth century Egypt. The twenty-four Arab bindings which were formerly in the possession of a Milanese bookseller, Carlo Alberto Chiesa, almost all date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They are all of goatskin with blind tooled designs, some of which are embellished with gold fillets and dot punching. Details of the individual covers are given alongside each item but three bindings should be singled out at this stage. The binding on plate 27 has roundels in the corner pieces with what appear to be badly rubbed name stamps. This is comparable to that shown on plate 2 and 72. The cover of plate 11 has roundels containing the pious formula 'God is my sufficiency'. This formula is found in three bindings, most probably South Arabian or Egyptian, which are in the collection of the Oriental Institute, Chicago. Since these three bindings and that of plate 11 all came from the same collection, there is good reason to suppose that they share a common origin and possibly common craftsmen. Plate 16 shows only a mutilated half of a binding but is of importance, not only from an artistic point of view but also from having come from a thirty-volume Qur'an copied, illuminated and bound for one of the Mamlûk Amir's, 'Abd al-Bâji (died 805/1400), who was a commander under the Mamlûk Sultan Barquq. Other parts of this Qur'an are in the British Library, the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC and the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.
The upper and lower covers have identical decorations consisting of multiple fillers, a panel of impressions of a rectangular format tool of interlocking palmettes, and an inner border panel of stamped crosses and dot punches. The main panel is filled with a geometrical interlace defined by a double filler and forming a twelve-pointed star in the centre within a large twelve-sided medallion. The compartments are adorned with gold dots and six-pointed rosettes. The spine has been repaired and is of comparatively recent date. The fore-edge flap consists of a rectangular panel outlined in gold and filled with clusters of five dots. The envelope flap has a border identical to that on the upper and lower covers. A large roundel outlined in gold is at the point of the flap and is filled with an intersecting six-pointed and six-pointed star. The compartments are heavily decorated with gold dots. The main panel of the envelope flap is covered with continuous impressions of a square format tool of crosses and dots. The double fillers have large leaf shapes defined by double fillers with knotted work where the floral stems intersect the sides.
2. The lower cover, fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over pasteboards; blind tooling; doublures of block-pressed leather.

202 mm x 182 mm

Egypt/ Syria, 14th century

88-1800

The main rectangular panel of the lower cover is filled with a geometrical interlace in which are dot punches and small rosettes, with the name Muhammad al-Bras or al-Zam. The central rosette, segments of which are repeated in the corners of the panel, is filled with a knotwork mesh. The panel is edged with fillets and continuous looping scrolls with three-bladed leaves. The envelope flap also has this border and is topped with latched knotwork and squares and a mandora at the point of the flap. The doublures are decorated with a dense pattern of sinuous three-petalled motifs. A note on paper on the fore-edge flap states the south part or volume of al-Azraqi.
3. A bookcover; leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublures of block-pressed leather.

217 mm x 157 mm

Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century

The upper and lower covers are decorated in an identical manner. The main panel is bordered on its outer edge by a panel of continuous impressions of a square format tool of interlocking links with multiple fillets defining narrower panels of stamped reverse 8-shapes and reverse Z-shapes. The inner panel is filled with a geometrical interlace forming a twelve-pointed star with a twelve-petalled rosette at the center. The rosette is repeated in the four corner pieces. Six-leaved rosettes and d×x penning are used to fill the spaces formed by the geometrical interlace. The fore-edge flap has tooled diamond shapes and rosettes. The border of the envelope flap is the same as that on the upper and lower covers. A rounded at the point of the flap is filled with an elaborate twelve-leaved flower with a smaller twelve-leaved rosette within a central hexagon. The ground of the envelope flap is covered with hatched cross-crossing rope work. The doublures have tight circular stems and feathery leaves.
4. A cover of a bookbinding, leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; double cover of block-pressed leather.
200 mm x 135 mm
Egypt/Byz. 14th/15th century
365/19-1888

A border with a continuous pattern of impressions of a rectangular format tool of palmettes and multiple foliat leaves in the inner panel. This is filled with rectilinear geometrical strapwork which creates a hexagonal interlaced motif at the centre. The field of the panel is filled with hatched cablework and gold dots. The double cover consists of dense interweaving of spicae which form configurations of four-leaved motifs and clusters of four-trilobed stems.

5. A cover of a bookbinding, leather, pasteboards removed; blind and gold tooling; paper paste-down.
200 mm x 135 mm
Egypt/Byz. 14th/15th century
365/19-1888

The main rectangular panel has two borders of impressions of a square format tool of floral patterns and hatched crosses. The panel is composed of a geometrical interlace forming a twelve-pointed star at the centre within a docketed framed roundel. The compartments are filled with gold dots and six-leaved rosettes. The cover has been trimmed on three sides.

Plate 5 (opposite)
6. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.
250 mm x 159 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
36C/5-1988
Fillets and a border of impressions of a square format stamp of a square intersected by diagonal lines frame the main panel. At the centre is an eight-pointed star whose perimeter is defined by a double fillet. Flecks radiate from the points and angles of the star. The inner defining fillets are the extension of an octagram which occupies the inner field of the star. The box is eight cm around a central one. The arms of the hexagram are filled with the impressions of a six-pointed star stamp and are painted in the centre with three dots. The doublure is similar to that of No. 50. See also No. 7.

7. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.
250 mm x 159 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
36D/5-1988
This is the companion cover to No. 6.

Plate 7
8. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pastebords; blind tooling; plain leather doublure.
247 mm x 184 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
L05/06/88
The border consists of a continuous pattern of impressions of a rectangular format of palmettes. An inner border is decorated with a tools Z pattern. The inner panel consists of an eight pointed star defined by multiple fillers. At each apex is a cluster of hatched knopwork which also appears in the corner pieces. The field of the star is densely incised with hatched diagonal knopwork mesh.

9. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling and stamping and gold dot punching.
247 mm x 186 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
926-1982
A double border consists of impressions of stamps of rectangular format, fillers and cabled work. The inner panel consists of an eight pointed star formed from two squares, their sides delineated with double fillers.

10. A cover of a bookbinding; red brown leather; blind tooling and stamping.
257 mm x 255 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
911-1982
The border and corner pieces consist of multiple fillers and a continuous pattern of impressions of a square format tool of crowns formed of intersecting links. A central corsedel has a geometric pattern of two intersecting hexagons, the interiors filled by gold dot punching. Most of the gold has now worn off. The rounded is surrounded by a double scalloped border.
11. The cover of a bookbinding: leather, blind tooling, stamping and gold dot punching.

248 mm x 169 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
925-1962
Part of one corner and side is missing. The border consists of continuous impressions of a stamp of square format and plain multiple fillets. A central rounded has a border of stamped projecting floral designs and a complex geometric interface forming a twelve-pointed star. The intervals have gold dot punches. Four stamped roundels above and below the roundel contain the words:
Allah habb, i.e. God is my sufficiency.
On the reverse fragments of paper backing contain some lines of neat naskh script.

12. The cover of a bookbinding: leather, blind tooling and stamping.

225 mm x 153 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
930-1932
A border of continuous impressions of a square format tool is edged with multiple fillets. A central rounded with stamped projecting floral designs round the circumference is filled with a geometric interface forming four six-pointed stars. Traces of gold dot punching remain.

13. A fragment of the upper cover of a bookbinding: brown leather, blind and gold tooling and stamping.

256 mm x 184 mm
Egypt, late 14th century
930-1932
The cover has been horizontally bisected. The double border consists of gold tooled fillets and stamped gold dot punches. The inner panel has a central medallion with geometric interface work forming polychrome compartments which are decorated with blind and gold dot punches. A scalloped border tapers to an elongated fleuron. The corner pieces are similarly decorated. Some traces of blue pigment remain in the border.

14. A fragment of a large bookbinding: leather, blind and gold tooling and stamping; traces of blue pigment.

Maximum height 264 mm, maximum width 203 mm
Probably Egypt, late 14th/early 15th century
950-1982
This fragment shows the degree of complexity of some geometric patterns produced in the Mamluk period. These are highly glazed in gold and some of the stamped decorative lacework was picked out in blue paint with alternating gold dot punches. In one part eight-sided stars alternate with octagons within which are flowers with eight petals.

15. A cover of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind tooling; plain leather doublure.

256 mm x 166 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th/15th century
360/35-1980
A broad margin bordered by three fillets on either side frames the inner panel. The margin is composed of a running pattern of impressions of a square format tool of interlacing eight-pointed stars in the centre of which are eight-pointed rosettes. The inner panel has a mandora with pendant tapering to a six-lobe motif on the vertical axis. The mandora is defined by two broad fillets which create a border which is decorated with interlacing stamps in the form of a reverse S. Three of these are also used to decorate the corner pieces. The field of the mandora is adorned with alternate stamps of an S on its sides and two meshed links.
16. The upper and lower covers and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather, blind and gold tooling and stamping; traces of blue pigment.  
260 mm x 172 mm  
Egyp/Syria, 14th/15th century  
913, 913A & 913B: 1982  
The basic design is comparable with No. 15. The outer border is made up of continuous impressions of a large square stamp while the inner border has repeating gold tooling reverse S-shapes. The main panel is outlined with gold fillets and the central mandorla is also delineated by gold tooled fillets and what appear to have been silver fillets (now oxidised). The mandorla has tri-lobed motifs on the vertical axis and radiating Becks from between the scallops on both sides. The field of the mandorla is decorated with stamped link motifs highlighted with gold quarter circles. A roundel with similar decoration is at the point of the envelope flap.

17. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublet of block-pressed leather.  
215 mm x 347 mm  
Egyp/Syria, late 14th/15th century  
388: 1898  
The border consists of multiple fillets and a panel of continuous impressions of a square format tool of three-petalled flowers within a tri-lobed compartment. An inner panel consists repeating S-shapes tooled in gold. The main panel has gold-painted corner pieces filled with lockwork and is centred by a roundel with substantial extensions on the vertical axis. The roundel has an eight-pointed star at its centre with almond-shaped leaves radiating from the points. Gold defining fillets surround the roundel as well as a band of S-shaped stamps. The roundel has a gold-painted outline which ropes on the vertical axis to points from which develop three large petalled calibers with lightly tooled leaves on each of three upper peaks. The doublet is similar to that found on Nos. 72 and 73 only of a smaller scale.
18. The lower cover of a bookbinding; brown leather over paper pasteboards, blind and gold tooling. 958 mm x 670 mm
Egypt, early 15th century
10701.1869
This is the companion piece to No. 20. The inner rectangular panel contains elaborate floral decoration with a scalloped outline in almond shape in the centre. This is repeated in sections in the corners of the panel. Three types of flowers are shown on the sinuous stems which frame the almond shape. The main outer margin consists of a broad border divided into a number of panels with diagonal lino work patterns. The pasteboards are made up of a large number of sheets of paper with naskhi script in a variety of hands.

19. The upper cover of a bookbinding; brown leather over paper pasteboards, blind and gold tooling; doublet removed. 958 mm x 670 mm
Egypt, early 15th century
10701.1869
This cover is almost certainly from a Qur'an. The large rectangular inner panel is filled with a complex geometrical interlace forming a number of different pointed stars with the compartments decorated with dot punctures. The main stars are repeated in the four corners of the broad outer margin which contains some of the ninety-nine names of Allah. These are written in naskhi script and begin in the top panel.

20. The lower cover of a bookbinding; brown leather over paper pasteboards, blind and gold tooling, pasteboards removed. 954 mm x 666 mm
Egypt, early 15th century
10701.3849
The decoration is identical to that of No. 18 to which this is a companion piece.
21. A cover of a bookbinding: leather over paper pastebords; blind and gold tooling; doubleuses of plain goatskin.
367 mm x 283 mm
Egypt/ Syria, first half 15th century
561-1985
The binding has been repaired and lacks its original spine and fore-edge flap. The upper and lower covers have a border of blind tooled and gold fillets and a margin of repeated 5-stamps. The corners pieces have gold tooled knucklework. In the centre is a roundel within which is a gold geometric interlace. The spaces between the gold interlace are filled with fine-painted lines and dot spotting. Similar decoration is used for the roundel at the point of the envelope flap. Part of the doubleuse of the upper cover is missing, revealing Arabic script on the pastebords, part of which refers to calendar notes. The binding now contains an incomplete section of the Qur'an.

22. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over pastebords; blind tooling and gold punching; doubleuses of block-pressed leather.
290 mm x 170 mm
Egypt, middle of the 15th century
373-1985
The covers are blind tooled with a border of multiple fillets which define an outer frame composed of a running pattern of impressions of a square format seol of three-petalled flowers within a tri-lobed compartment. The inner panels contain a medallion with extensions forming a three-petalled seol in the vertical axis. A large roundel is edged by scallops with loops at their apex. The field of the roundel is filled with a geometric interlace composed of a hexagon and two interlocking triangles which form six hexagons and a six-pointed star in the centre. Most of the gold from the dot punches in the roundel and in the apices of the scalloped border is missing. The envelope flap has a comparable border and a diamond configuration at the point of the flap which consists of a quatrefoil ornament. The doubleuses are decorated with a complex pattern of leafy scrolls.

23. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding: leather over paper pastebords; blind and gold tooling; doubleuses light brown leather; blind tooling.
231 mm x 148 mm
Egypt, 15th century
1952-1981
Both covers have a panel border of continuous impressions of a square format tool of tri-lobed mouth, fillets and a medallion with gold dot punching. Multiple fillets frame the inner panel which has a complex geometrical interlace with a twelve-pointed star at the centre. This is repeated in parts in the corner pieces. The interlaces are filled with gold dot punching and stamped animals. The outer panel of the doubleuses is identical to that on the outside covers. Two borders of multiple fillets frame the inner panel which has seven hexagons, each with a six-pointed star at its centre, making up the central motif. Above and below are larger seol shaped motifs, made up of four tri-lobed shapes radiating from a central cross. These tri-lobed designs are repeated as corner pieces. The original end papers are fastened to the doubleuses by a thin band of leather with a fireproof outline.

24. A bound manuscript: Arabic; Al-Wa'is or an abridged commentary on the Qur'an by Abu 'l-Hassan b. 'Ali b. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Ali Al-Walidi (died 1075), transcribed by 'Umar Al-Danjewi, 315 ff. (sweeping 1 folio between ff. 7 & 8); black and red ink; gold chapter headings; illuminated double frontispiece and frontispiece; binding of leather over pastebords; exterior covers blind and gold tooled and with gold and blue painting; doubleuses of marbled papers, probably of 19th century.
360 mm x 275 mm
Egypt, 890/1478
7200-1863
The author is not one of the most widely known commentators on the Qur'an. The Arabic word for an explanation or commentary is tafsir and is used for commentaries on scientific and philosophical works particularly those translated from the Greek. In Islam, however, it has the meaning of a commentary on the Qur'an and the science of interpreting the Holy Book. This is a special branch of learning taught in religious schools and universities throughout the Islamic world. The majority of these commentaries are continuous with every phrase and sometimes even every word explained in detail. Although there are differences of opinion about the value of some of these commentaries, they are undoubtedly important for the study of Islamic law and theology. This volume is also of interest in that it contains an inscription stating that it is from the Wafi, or a place of religious endowment of the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashtar Safar al-Um Qai Bay (reigned 1498-1495). The illuminations are typical of Mamluk book decoration of this period. The decoration of the binding is extremely close to that shown on a 14th/15th century cover from Egypt or Byrsa in the Chester Beatty Library Manuscript Collection, No. 58, (Illustrated Bosch, Carwell, Peberdiehi, p. 199).
25. The envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards, blind and gold tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.
Height 268 mm
Egyp/Etrus, 15th century
366/21-1888
The outer frame of impressions of a square format tool of alternating triple-tipped flowers and stems is bordered by multiple fillers. The panel of the flap is occupied by a rounded with two gold tooled lines. The field is filled with stamped nested links and gold tear-drops. The panel flanking the rounded is bordered by a single gold line and corner-pieces with gold tooled knotwork.

26. The envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; plain leather doublure.
Height 260 mm
Egyp/Etrus, 15th century
366/32-1888
The border is made up of multiple fillers and a panel of impressions of a square format tool of intersecting leaves. The main panel has an unadorned roundel at the point of the flap with a small crowned roundel on the horizontal axis on the side nearest the fore-edge flap. This and the main field of the panel is filled with stamped repeating palmettes.

Plate 24
27. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind toothing and stamping.
258 mm x 172 mm
Egypt/Sharjah, South Arabia, 15th-16th century
915-1982
Two sides and a corner are missing. The border consists of fillers and continuous impressions of a rectangular format stamp of beak shaped designs. The corner-pieces contain roundels with what appear to be badly robbed names stamps. See also Nos. 2, 72, 75. The main panel contains a roundel which is filled with a knopwork mesh and a grid of nine squares and rectangles. Small diamond-shaped areas of knopwork are placed above and below the roundel.

28. A cover of a bookbinding; leather, blind toothing and gold dot punching.
242 mm x 175 mm
Egypt/South Arabia, 15th-16th century
915-1982
This cover is identical to No. 27 except for the proportions at the corner-pieces and round the circumference of the central oval.

29. A cover of a bookbinding; leather, pasteboards removed; blind toothing; paper paste-down.
249 mm x 185 mm
Egypt/Syria, 14th-15th century
366/12-1888
The cover is simply tooled with a border of fillers and corner-pieces which contain intermeshed knopwork. The small roundel contains knopwork, dot punching, and four small roundels. The doublet contains impressions of Arabic script.

30. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind toothing.
250 mm x 185 mm
Egypt/Syria, 15th century
366/10-1888
A panel of continuous palmettes formed by a rectangular stamp borders multiple fillers. An inner double filler contains names which are placed three dots. The roundel is filled with a knopwork mesh and dots.

31. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over pasteboards; blind toothing; paper paste-down.
257 mm x 182 mm
Egypt/Syria, 15th century
366/11-1888
This is the companion cover to No. 30. The paper paste-down has calendar and numerical markings with pencilled names. Two lines of poetry are on the right-hand side with an inscription below.
32. A bookcover: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublures of block-pressed leather. Egypt/Syria/South Arabia, 14th/15th century
1955-1961
The upper and lower covers both have a border of multiple fillets and a panel of continuous impressions of a square format tool forming quadrants. The inner panel has a roundel within which is an interlace forming an eight-pointed star. The field is decorated with dot punches and hatched curved flecks which also radiate from the edge of the roundel. The doublures have an all-over pattern of scalloped diamond shapes within which are two leaves and intertwining stems.
33. A fragment of the cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling and gold dot punching.
197 mm x 144 mm
Egypt/Nubia/North Africa, 14th/15th century
910-1962
The edges of the cover have been severely trimmed. The only decoration is a roundel filled with complex interlacing hatched knopwork, and six flecks radiating from the outer edge.

34. The cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling, stamping and gold dot punching.
202 mm x 176 mm
Egypt/Nubia/North Africa, 14th/15th century
920-1962
The border is made up of continuous impressions of a strip of square format of link designs and plain toolled fillets. The main panel has scalloped corner pieces and a roundel, all of which have hatched knopwork ornamentation and gold dot punching.

35. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling and gold dot punching.
270 mm x 199 mm
Egypt/Nubia/North Africa, 14th/15th century
916-1962
Much of the outer edge of this cover is missing. The border consists of fillets and continuous impressions of stamps of a square format of interlacing hatching. The outer panel has a central roundel garnished by scallops and radiating flecks. The field of the inner panel is occupied by a hexagonal star whose defining fillets extend to the periphery. The compartments formed by the star are filled with stamped semi-circular patterns (cf. No. 36).
36. A cover of a bookbinding, leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; plain leather doublure.
210 mm x 170 mm
Egypt/Syria/North Africa, 15th century
592-1988
The border panel contains a running pattern of impressions of a square format tool of two incised loops. Fillers and cornerpieces frame the main panel which has a rounded in the centre. The rounded is garnished by scallops and intervening radiating flecks. The field of the inner panel is occupied by a six-pointed star whose detaining fillers extend to the periphery. The compartments formed by the star are filled with eight lobed rosettes and gold dots.

37. A cover of a bookbinding, leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; plain leather doublure.
262 mm x 195 mm
Egypt/Syria/North Africa, 15th century
360-5-1888
A panel of stamped heart shapes and eight-leaved rosettes borders the fillers adjoining the central panel which has corner pieces and a scalloped roundel. A six-pointed star occupies the field of the roundel. The doublure has been used for notes written at a later date. Some of these refer to a medical work and its sources and include details of prescriptions. The script is probably North African.

38. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling and gold dot punching.
225 mm x 156 mm
Egypt/Syria/North Africa, 15th century
917-1982
This cover is similar to No. 35. A border of stamped hatched link motifs and multiple fillers surrounds a main panel which has a rounded with scalloped outline and radiating flecks. The field is decorated with a hexagonal star with gold dot punching.

39. The cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling, stamping and gold dot punching.
258 mm x 178 mm
Egypt/Syria/North Africa, 15th century
921-1982
The design of this binding is very close to that of Nos. 35 and 38. See also No. 40.

40. The cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling, stamping and gold dot punching.
275 mm x 165 mm
Egypt/Syria/North Africa, 15th century
923-1982
This binding is very close to No. 39 and may even be a companion cover.
42. The cover of a bookbinding: leather; blind tooling, stamping and gold dot punching.  
265 mm x 156 mm  
Egypt/North Africa, 15th century  
924-1982  
The border consists of fillets and continuous impressions of a stamp of square format of crosses with gold dot punches in the interstices. The inner panel has corner pieces and a central scalloped roundel within which is a hexagon. The overall design is similar to the previous three examples.

43. A cover of a bookbinding: leather trimmed at top and remounted on card; blind tooling.  
228 mm x 178 mm  
Egypt/North Africa, 15th century  
360/95-1888  
The border consists of fillets and a panel of impressions of a rectangular format tool of floral stems. The centre of the inner panel is occupied by an eight-scalloped medallion with a field of densely tooled knoework.

44. A cover of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublebure of block-pressed leather.  
274 mm x 185 mm  
Egypt/North Africa, 14th/15th century  
360/16-1898  
Multiple fillets and a border of a continuous pattern of impressions of a square format tool of circular stems and leaves frame the inner panel. At the centre is a roundel which is framed by a scalloped border tapering to a cross-shaped motif made up of five stamped crosses on the vertical axis. The roundel is filled with a six-pointed star, the compartments of which are filled with gold dots. The doublebure is decorated with flaxen stems and leaves.

45. A cover of a bookbinding: leather; blind tooling and stamping and gold dot punching.  
249 mm x 171 mm  
Syria/Egypt/North Africa, 15th century  
951-1982  
The border which consists of continuous impressions of a square format and fillets is worn. In the centre of the main panel is a scalloped medallion with elongated ends, within which is a roundel with a hexagonal geometric design.

46. A cover of a bookbinding: leather; blind tooling and stamping.  
257 mm x 164 mm  
Syria/Egypt/North Africa, 15th century  
932-1982  
The border is made up of square stamps and multiple fillets. The main panel has a central roundel with elongations on the vertical axis tapering in floral-shaped points. This is the companion cover to the binding in the Oriental Institute, Chicago, A. 1221/1 (illustrated Bosch, Carwell, Pfeifferriedge, op. cit. p. 196.)

47. The lower cover, fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards, blind and gold tooling; doublebure of block-pressed leather.  
265 mm x 187 mm  
Egypt/North Africa, 15th/16th century  
5069-1888  
A border panel of a continuous palette and fillets frame a panel with corner pieces which are cupped and project to a point where the thin marking line forms a square. These are decorated with cablework tooling, as is the field of the eight-scalloped roundel in the centre. Flexes project from the concealed roundel. The envelope flap is densely tooled with cross-crossing hatched lines and cablework with a large unicoloured circle at the point of the flap. This has a smaller circle, similarly tooled to the flap, placed on its horizontal axis towards the fore-edge. At the periphery of this small roundel is a group of three large gold dots. The doublebures are densely patterned consisting in the main of four interlocking floral stems.

48. The envelope flap of a binding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; blue painting.  
Height 628 mm  
Probably Egypt/North Africa, late 15th/early 16th century  
5027-1954  
The exterior has a border of multiple blind tooled fillets and inner borders of gold tooled link and cablework design. The next section is divided into three, the outer two having blind and gold tooled knoework. The inner panel has an inscription in dawhah script. This is taken from Surah 68, al-Balad or The Victory, v. 25 and is incomplete (see also No. 145). It reads: 'It is they who disbelieved and turned you away from the Sacred Mosque and the offering withheld from arriving at its destined place; and were it not for the believing men and believing women whose not having known you might have stoned you down, and thus something hateful might have afflicted you on their account without knowledge'. The main panel has elaborate gold tooled floral decoration with blue painted highlights against a punched ground. The interior has a similar border and an elaborate gold tooled tear-drop motif at the corner of the flap. This is filled with floral work with blue paint on the petals which have been incised.
49. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pastedboards; blind and gold tooling; plain leather doublure.
180 mm x 130 mm
North Africa, 14th/15th century
566/22-1888
The border is composed of continuous impressions of a square format tool of interlaced lines and multiple fillets. The rounded at the centre has a scalloped outline with radiating hooks. The field is composed of a pentagon interspersed with a central pentagon and five pentagonal compartments. Eight-pointed rosettes and gold dots are stamped in the background and the six pentagonal compartments. See also No. 50.

50. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pastedboards; blind and gold tooling; plain leather doublure.
180 mm x 130 mm
North Africa, 14th/15th century
566/20-1888
This is the companion cover to No. 49.

51. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pastedboards; blind and gold tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.
178 mm x 135 mm
North Africa, 15th century
566/29-1888
The border panel is composed of impressions of a square format tool of intertwining S-shapes with floral background. The rectangular inner panel contains a medallion with a looped scalloped outline. The loops are centered by dots. Perkins radiate from the outer edges of the loops and the spandrels of the scallops. The moulded has an outer ring defined by fillets. The central field is filled with a six-pointed star and an intersecting six scalloped rounded. The compartments are filled with gold dots and stamped crosses. The doublure comprises intertwining added stems and leaves.

52. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pastedboards; blind and gold tooling; plain leather doublure.
184 mm x 134 mm
North Africa, 14th/15th century
566/24-1888
This cover is very close to No. 49. The only difference is the inclusion of eight-pointed rosettes in the corner pieces.

53. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding; dark brown leather (sheep) over pastedboards; blind tooling.
209 mm x 152 mm
North Africa, early 16th century
90.1989
Both covers and the envelope flap all have a border of fillets. The main panels on the upper and lower covers are divided with intersecting double diagonal lines and in the diamond shapes thus formed are stamped engravled rosettes. These were formerly filled with rosettes but a large number of these are missing. The rosettes on the envelope flap are of the same type but smaller.
54. A cover of a bookbinding: leather, pasteboards removed; blind tooling; paper paste-down.
262 mm x 178 mm
North Africa/Egypt, 15th century
365/28-1888
The central panel is decorated with a scalloped mandorla with fillets at the upper and lower ends on the vertical axis. The pattern in the centre, akin to a tentacle wave, is repeated in the four corners with narrow projecting fillets. The paper paste-down is covered with seventeen lines of text in naskhi script from the Hadith or Collection of Sayings of the Prophet. A paper label on the cover states that these are footnotes by al-Abbari on the work by Ibn al-Hajib. Abd al-Din Mufti al-b. 'Umar al-Abbari (d. 1264) was the author of two works on scholastic philosophy and Jamal al-Din Abu 'Ali Fazl b. 'Umar al-Ash'ari who lived and worked in Cairo and Damascus.

55. A cover of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublebore of block-pressed leather.
187 mm x 121 mm
North Africa, 15th century
366/27-1888
The border is composed of impressions of a rectangular format tool with intersecting mandorlas and multiple fillets. The inner panel has an eight-scalloped medallion, outlined in double fillets with flecks projecting from the spandrels. The field of the medallion is filled with meshed knotwork, as are the corresponding spaces which have rounded projections tapering to a point of three gold dots. The doublebore is decorated with a loose pattern of stems and leaves.

56. The lower cover, fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublebore of block-pressed leather.
207 mm x 135 mm
North Africa/Egypt/Syria, 16th century
366/28-1888
The main rectangular panel of the lower cover has a margin of impressions of a rectangular tool of interwoven links and multiple fillets. A scalloped roundel with flecks radiating from the spandrels of the scallop is filled with a stylized star defined by double fillets. Eight-leaved rosettes and gold dots adorn the roundel as well as two diamond-shaped clusters of knotwork above and below the roundel. The envelope flap has a compendible margin and a roundel at the point of the flap. On the horizontal axis on the side away from the point of the flap adjoining the roundel is a small medallion of eight-leaved roses and gold dots. The doublebore which consists predominantly of flecky leaves are worn.

57. A cover of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; paper paste-down.
290 mm x 148 mm
North Africa/Egypt, 15th century
366/30-1888
The border panel is made up of impressions of a square format tool of palmette-type motifs and cinged with broad fillets. The inner panel has an eight-scalloped medallion with gold dots in the spandrels. The field is covered with diagonally intersecting knotwork. Similar decoration fills the corner pieces and the rounded projections which taper to a point with three gold dots. A note pinned on the cover states that this is from the first volume of a work by al-Abbari on Ibn al-Hajib al-Farsi (see no. 54). In contrast with usul (mentioned on the paper pasted on No. 54), which are the "roots" or sources of legal knowledge, the "fard" or "branches", are the body of positive rules derived from them.

58. A cover of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; paper paste-down.
299 mm x 148 mm
North Africa/Egypt, 15th century
366/31-1888
This is the companion cover to No. 57.

59. A cover of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; plain leather doublebore.
229 mm x 158 mm
North Africa, 15th century
366/33-1888
The border consists of a panel of impressions of a rectangular tool of eight-leaved rosettes and four-petalled shapes. The main panel has an eight-scalloped medallion with flecks radiating from the spandrels. The field of the roundel is filled with hatched interlacing knotwork with a gold dot at the centre. The corner pieces have cusped outlines and arrow-like forms projecting inward. They are decorated with interlacing knotwork. The cover has been trimmed at one end.
60. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doubleture of block-pressed leather.
241 mm x 154 mm
North Africa, 15th century
926/94-1988
This is the companion cover to No. 59. The doubleture has a pattern of circular stems and floral work.

61. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doubleture of block-pressed leather.
250 mm x 170 mm
North Africa, 15th century
926/95-1888
The main panel is bordered with a panel of impressions of a rectangular tool of palmettes and multiple fillets. The panel is decorated with an eight-scalloped medallion with radiating flecks and knoework decoration. The corner pieces are similarly adorned and have rounded projections tapering to a point with three gold dots. The doubleture has tightly interwoven floral stems.

62. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling and stamping.
251 mm x 155 mm
North Africa/Egypt, probably 15th century
926-1982
The cover, which is damaged by worm, has a border formed of continuous impressions of a stamp of rectangular format with curvilinear designs. The inner panel contains a scalloped rounded with rather coarsely tooled inner decoration. The corner pieces which are cupped and have an inward projecting point are similarly decorated. The gold dot punching has been so heavily pressed that the leather has been pierced through.

63. A cover of a bookbinding (lacks two sides); leather; blind tooling and gold punching.
240 mm x 159 mm
North Africa/Egypt, probably 15th century
925-1982
This binding has been damaged by damp and parts of the edges are badly worn. An outer border of broad fillets and a floral pattern formed of continuous impressions of a rectangular stamp surround a main panel with a scalloped medallion at the centre. This is decorated with hatched knoework, as are the corner-pieces which are cupped and have inward projecting points.

64. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling.
256 mm x 146 mm
North Africa, probably 15th century
914-1982
The cover has been affected by worm and one side has been trimmed. The main panel has a central scalloped medallion and inward projecting corner pieces, all in plain tooling. The field is filled with cross-crossing hatched knoework and the border comprises continuous impressions of a stamp of a square format tool with gold dot punching. The companion cover is almost certainly the binding now in the Islamic Museum, East Berlin, 1875 and illustrated Bosh, Carnwell, Petherbridge, op. cit., p. 173.

65. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind and gold dot punching.
232 mm x 165 mm
North Africa/South Arabia, 15th century
927-1982
A border of fillets and hatched cablework surrounds a main panel in which is a rounded with scalloped border. The rounded has hatched lines and gold dot punches. Similarly decorated motifs with radiating flecks are above and below the rounded.
66. A cover of a bookbinding; leather, pasteboards removed; blind tooling; remains of paper paste-down.
270 mm x 185 mm
North Africa/Spain/Figgy, 15th century
5665-1888
The border consists of multiple fillets and panels of cablework with separate panels of stamped crosses in the centre of each side. The inner fillet has small flecks at each corner. The main panel has thin lines marking the quarter sections. At the centre in the overall shape of a cross is a complex motif of interlaced knotwork extending at top and bottom on the vertical axis. This forms a swastika at the centre and dot punches fill the compartments. Some unvocalised Arabic script remains on the paper paste-down.

67. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over pasteboards; blind tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.
175 mm x 125 mm
South Arabia/Figgy, 14th century
5665-1888
The inner panel is bordered by multiple fillets and a panel of impressions of a rectangular tool of palmettes. The diamond-shaped motif at the centre of the inner panel consists of interlaced knotwork with rotating flecks. The doublure is decorated with delicate stems tapering to three leaves. One of the upper corners and the lower panel have broken away.

68. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind tooling; plain leather doublure.
245 mm x 165 mm
South Arabia, 14th/15th century
5665-1890
Multiple fillets and a double border of hatched interlacing knotwork frame the inner panel which has at its centre a lightly defined rounded with knotwork decoration.

69. A cover of a bookbinding; leather; blind tooling.
235 mm x 162 mm
South Arabia/North Africa, 15th century
920-1982
A large corner section is missing. The border consists of fillets and stamped crosses. In the centre of the inner panel is an unusual quatrefoil motif with a plain-foiled outline. It is filled with stamped crosses and gold dot punches.

70. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.
257 mm x 180 mm
South Arabia/North Africa, 15th century
5665-1888
Multiple fillets border a marginal panel which has a continuous stamped interlocking pattern. Corner pieces, similarly stamped, have ogival projections. The central motif has a scalloped outline produced by three interlocking stems-like arabesque loops. These extend at top and bottom on the vertical axis to a soaring point with looped cablework. The compartments of the motif are filled with eight-pointed stars, dot punching and interlocking cablework at the centre. The doublure is decorated with tapering floral work and four-panellit flowers (cf. the doublure of No. 6). See also No. 71.
71. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind and gold tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.

234 mm x 168 mm
South Arabia/North Africa, 15th century
36514-1088
This is almost certainly the companion cover to No. 70. It is in better condition and the only stylistic difference is to be seen in the compartments at the centre of the strapwork which is filled with eight-pointed stars rather than cablework. The oval prolusions at the corner pieces have only four as opposed to eight gold dots. Since the doublures are identical it seems reasonable to assume that this cover and No. 70 formed the upper and lower covers of a bookbinding.

72. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.

290 mm x 190 mm
Egypt/Syria/South Arabia, 15th century
3652-2188
Fillen and a border of interlocking heart-shaped and floral motifs (frame the central panel) which contains a roundel which is filled with a lozenged and grid of nine squares. The corner pieces each contain three roundels within which are stamped the words 'Amr ibn L.A." etc. The work of Amr. The doublure is decorated with a swirling floral pattern with large fleshy leaves. A paper note on the cover states this is from a work on the transmission of the Hadith.

73. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; blind tooling; doublure of block-pressed leather.

246 mm x 190 mm
Egypt/Syria/South Arabia, 15th century
3653-3188
This is the companion cover to No. 72.
74. A bound manuscript; Arabic; Dala’I al khayrati fi dihq al-salat’ ila Tala'iyya al-mukhtarat or Guides to blessings concerning the recitation of prayers for the chosen Prophet; a prayer book of the North African marabout or holy man Abu ‘Abd ‘Ali ibn Salamah b. Abu Bakr al-Jazuli who died at Aflighat (1465). 300 ff., 7 lines of maghribi script per page; illuminated head-pieces and several full-page miniature hand-paintings in gold and colours; later additions at beginning and end; binding of stamped and gilded leather over pasteboards with leather thong. The doublures are of green moiré silk, green being the colour of Islam.

75 mm x 130 mm

Morocco, probably first quarter of eighteenth century, written in the reign of the Sultan al Mansur Rabbii b. Isma’il b. Ubayd Allah ibn Salamah. From medieval times, the Shias who in general are descendants of the Prophet Muhammad have played a major part in Morocco's history. The cult of the holy man has also been particularly strong there as a result of the frequent Christian incursions from Spain and Portugal. A bnabi who was born in Fez in southern Morocco founded a Shiash sect and this work it his most important. It consists of a collection of prayers for the Prophet Muhammad, a description of his name, his tomb and so on. The volume contains a number of illustrations including one on folio 58v of the Khulab or sacred shrine in Mecca. The ilhgalional format of the book is particular to North Africa and the binding with the thong is also typical. This may have developed from the fact that manuscripts from North and West Africa were traditionally unbound, the leaves being contained in a leather wallet and the thong was probably used to tie the leather covers tightly round the loose leaves.

75. A bound manuscript; Arabic; al-Sabib

1. The Genealogy or Collection of Traditions relating to the Prophet Muhammad and early Islam by Muhammad b. Isma’il Abū ‘Abd ‘Ali al-Jazuli (died 1465). 110 ff. in folio, written in black maghribi script, 26 lines per page; rubricae in red; binding of red leather over pasteboards, block-stamped and tooled. 288 mm x 212 mm

North Africa, probably Morocco, early 19th century. The contemporary binding of red morocco has stamped central metallics and interlocking knowckow borders.

76. A wooden tablet used in Islamic schools to give instruction in grammar and religion; one side contains twenty-eight lines of text from the Qur’an (Sura 59, vv. 11-19), the other has five lines of text within an elaborately geometric border; the text is in brown ink in a form of maghribi script and this and the unadorned form of decoration are typical of West North Africa. 375 mm x 265 mm

North West Africa, 19th century.
complete. Gilding which was put on with a fine brush was a further technique and there are also some examples of blind tooled lines painted blue. The front and back covers were usually decorated in the same style but the rear cover normally was simpler. Around the central medallion begins to be represented with a lobed outline and within the medallion the decoration itself becomes more complex. The execution of the corner pieces followed that of the central medallion and their shape becomes more and more varied until it is often quite deeply indented. It is at this stage that sunk panels become quite familiar in Islamic bindings. Because the insides of the covers were naturally less exposed to wear and tear, the ornamentation is often very well preserved and it is on the insides, which are usually of lighter coloured leather, that some of the most outstanding type of filigree decoration can be seen. (See plates 96 and 97, for example). It was craftsmen in Herat who were responsible for developing this leather binding or cut-pattern technique, the doublelures of the bindings often being painted in deep blue which threw the gilded filigree patterns into greater relief. This process is called nuzumah or Abir by Dost Muhammad writing in 1544. Mustafa Ali, writing thirteen years later, commends the Persian bookbinders for their skill in such cut work in comparison with the contemporary Ottoman bookbinders. During the best period of this craft these patterns were cut out of leather but paper came to be substituted in the sixteenth century since it was both cheaper and easier to handle. Two of the finest examples of leather filigree work in the Museum's collection are contained on the inside covers shown on plates 99 and 115. The latter pair of covers are lacquer painted with birds, insects, trees and flowers within a floral border. The insides are of red leather with a central panel of inlaid white leather cut to show gold and red flowers and leaves. The border contains inlaid gold inscriptions within compartments and blue corner decorations with gold leather filigree work. The overall effect is one of extraordinary richness and although the binding may be of at late a date as the eighteenth century, the leather filigree technique on this binding is attributable to its fifteenth century precursors. The other pair of covers (452 & 452A- 1888) are of leather over pasteboard with gold block-stamped panels on the outside. The insides have a central panel with elaborate gold stamped and cut patterns and a border of gold work over blue, green and orange grounds. The central panel is surrounded by a double border of leather filigree work in panels inlaid on red leather with gold painted decoration. These covers, which are probably of the seventeenth century, are also of interest in that the patterned end-papers are still attached. The subject of marbled and decorated papers is discussed in the section on Turkish bindings. The Herat school also introduced into the decoration of bookcovers the depiction of landscapes with real and mythical animals, often of Far Eastern inspiration, executed both in blindstamping and cut-pattern work. The introduction of such Far Eastern forms of decoration is evidence of the strong artistic connections between Peking and the Timurid capital which were developed from the very foundation of the Herat Academy in 1405. However, the connections with China were not all artistic and peaceful, the Sultun Timur dying in 1405 on the very eve of his planned conquest of China. In the fifteenth century the traditional method of stamping a design with a number of small dots began to be supplemented by the use of single, large metal blocks which allowed for more elaborate designs, including landscape scenes, as were then coming into fashion. This technical development belongs to the succeeding century and will be discussed in more detail later. Not all Herat bindings, however, were decorated with landscapes. Some of them, for example, were adorned with geometric or arabesque patterns and others were embellished with the inscription motifs that have already been mentioned and will be discussed in detail further on. The sixteenth century and the onset of the Safavid dynasty saw a political and cultural shift away from Herat in the east to Tabriz in the north-west and Shiraz in the south of Persia. Likewise there was a change in the arts and in the field of binding both technique and style underwent major alterations. The biggest change in technique was the introduction of a widespread use of the stamp. Naturalistic designs were often engraved on one large stamp while symmetrical designs, usually of a floral nature, were engraved on a half-plate which was used twice to complete the join is visible in the middle and this introduction of mechanically produced designs marks a genuine decline in the art of binding. Examples of these joins can be seen on the underside of covers of a number of stamped bindings in the Museum's collection. The binding on plate 92, which is probably a late sixteenth century example, has inlaid paper filigree work and a stamped inscription from the interior on the inside; plate 104, which is possibly of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century has painted filigree work on the inside; the binding in plate 113 which has inlaid paper filigree work on the inside cover is to be dated to the seventeenth century. A pair of covers with a flap flaps attached to an album of calligraphy, belong to the early sixteenth century and the outside block-stamped panels depict trees, birds and rabbits in deep relief within a border of smaller sunk panels. The stampers themselves were made of steel or copper but some stamps, especially those which were used for smaller areas of decoration such as corner pieces or medallions were later made of gold. There is also a pair of covers with a stamped inscription from a leather or wood. The Victoria and Albert Museum have a number of gold, silver, steel and leather stamps, including some for producing landscape scenes, (See fig. 16). Furthermore, the pressing of the stamp was often combined with the process of gilding. Dampered leather was covered with gilt and then pressed with the hot plate. Craftsmanship by hand has by this time become the rarity, rather than the norm. One of the bindings in the Museum's collection (see plate 102) may well have been stamped and gilded in one process of this sort. The outside, which is stamped in gold in high relief, is decorated with animals, birds, trees and clouds, and has a border of flowers on panels. The inside is of red leather with elaborate gold filigree work against a multi-coloured background. These two covers are probably of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Two fine sixteenth century bindings in the Victoria and Albert Museum are shown on plates 92 and 93. The former is of crimson leather over pasteboard gold painted with a dragon, animals, and birds as well as flowers and Far Eastern clouds. The second binding, a very fine piece of leatherwork, is of white leather with two gazelles in the centre and tendrils patterns elsewhere. The latter is of brown leather with similar gold painted animals and a central block-stamped medallion. The corner pieces are gilt and the corners are more frequently used. In some expensive bindings the medallions and corner pieces were not directly stamped but the parts were made separately and fixed on the cover. There are, not surprisingly, a number of bindings which have lost some of these sections that were pasted on. One of the finest medallion bindings in the Museum's collection is seen in plate 98. The outside of this pair of late sixteenth century covers has highly ornate stamped medallions and corner pieces, all of which are made of leather and inset in lacquered pasteboard covers. The inside covers have paper filigree medallions inset on a gold painted red leather ground. The paper medallions are relatively rare (see plate 97), probably of the early seventeenth century has a central medallion, corner pieces and an outer border of florally decorated panels stamped in gold on the inside. Other examples of medallion bindings are found on plate 110 and the inside covers of 107. One of the Museum's most important Persian bindings is attached to a manuscript of Nizami's tragic love story Khosro o Shirin. The binding's importance is that it is signed by Muhammad Muhsin of Tabriz and the colophon of the manuscript has a date of 1608. The manuscript is also of great interest in that it contains nineteen miniature paintings signed by the renowned Safavid painter, Ridvii 'Abdarr. That on folio 147 recto is dated 1632, however, was not however, was given a suitable date for these slightly hardened and affected paintings, does leave some doubt as to the authenticity of the date of 1608. It would be usual for the manuscript to shift away from Herat in the east to Tabriz in the north-west and Shiraz in the south of Persia. Persia. Likewise there was a change in the arts and in the field of binding both technique and style underwent major alterations. The biggest change in technique was the introduction of a widespread use of the stamp. Naturalistic designs were often engraved on one large stamp while symmetrical designs, usually of a floral nature, were engraved on a half-plate which was used twice to complete the join is visible in the middle and this introduction of mechanically produced designs marks a
of how bright this binding must have been. The doublures are of gold leather filigree work on red, blue and green grounds. The corners are filled with leather illuminated work and the centre has a small gold block-stamped medallion. One of the Persian book covers of the seventeenth or early eighteenth century had been very badly damaged by damp. When it was treated by the Museum’s Conservation Department to arrest further damage, the corner-pieces and central medallion, all of gold filigree, were removed and the backing underneath was shown to be of various coloured silk. This had not been immediately noticeable since apart from where the filigree design had covered the silk and preserved the original colour, the remainder of the material had completely faded. This is one of the two examples of material backing (usually referred to as 
striung
) in the bindings in the Museum’s collection (the other being a Turkish binding, plate 145) but points again to the rich variety of techniques used by Persian binders.

The seventeenth century witnessed a decline in the art of binding in Persia and in the following century some bindings appear which have an undivided field of design. Apart from the decline in the way binders used the original space afforded to them, the designs were frequently painted, rather than stamped. One of the last stages in the decline of Persian bindings is the elimination of the border which was usually composed of cartouches and corner-pieces, and the advent of the nineteenth century witnesses bindings which, probably resulting from European influences, have no flap and often have only a small blind stamped medallion, usually with a floral design, on the front cover.

One of the outstanding achievements of Persian binders was the development of the technique of painting on paper-mâché boards under lacquer varnish. This technique attained great popularity among the Safavids in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in centres such as Isfahan (which had become the Safavid capital in 1598) and Tabriz. There does not yet appear to be enough evidence to state with any certainty whether lacquer painting was introduced by Chinese craftsmen or by Persian painters who had visited the Chinese Empire and returned with knowledge of this new method of decoration. What is known is that Safavid illuminators and miniature painters played a more important part than the bookbinder in the adoption of this technique which does not appear to predate 1525. Indeed, it was the painter’s art that flourished on the bindings.

The earliest lacquered bindings were on a heavily chalcedony leather or parchment ground, but pasteboard came to be the material used most frequently for these bindings since paint cracked too easily on leather. The pasteboard was fixed with gypsum or chalk, was polished and given a layer of colourless lacquer before the artist painted the design in water colours. The dried painting was then covered with several coats of transparent lacquer to fix and protect the painting. One of the attractions of lacquer is that it not only gives a glow to the colours but creates a veil, as it were, through which the beholder is encouraged to pass. One of the most beautiful lacquer painted bindings in the Museum is a pair of sixteenth century covers (plate 91) with scenes of the hunt and an outdoor feast. The insides are a rich golden colour with flowers and birds and in one of the central cusped medallions a picture of Maomet in the desert with the wild animals painted in gold on a black ground. A single-paper-mâché cover (plate 106), probably of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, is lacquered painted and outlined in gold with a scene of wolves, bears, a dragon, a 
nstirnur
, trees and flowers all on a dark red ground. An outer black border has a gold floral design. A pair of separated covers (plate 116) which are probably of the eighteenth century are lacquered painted on the outside and decorated with stamped and inlaid paper filigree work on the black leather insides.

The seventeenth century contains a great deal of patchiness and rather crude colours predominated. As happens so often, the finest masterpieces must be looked for at the start of this artistic development. The Victoria and Albert Museum has a good collection of nineteenth century lacquer painted bindings. All the covers are of paper-mâché and two of them (plates 121 and 122) show Nādir Shīh and the Persians attacking Muhammad Shīh of India at the battle of Karnal in 1759. The inner covers are undecorated but the brightness of the outside covers more than compensates for this. Another pair are versions of the wall paintings in the Chihil Sutun Palace at Isfahan. The binding on plate 123 depicts Shah 'Abbas I Khāqān at a banquet with Khālīl Sūlahan, the ambassador from India, while plate 124 has a scene of Shah Tahmāsp (1524-1576) entertaining the Khan of the Uzbegs. Both these covers are painted with great attention to detail and the delicacy of the trees in the background is particularly to be noted. While the overall composition is stiff and formalised, particularly in aspects such as the way the bows of fruit are shown piled up, the impression is one of strength and liveliness. The inside covers of this latter pair are highly decorative. A central medallion and corner-pieces have roses and other flowers painted in natural colours on a gold ground while the overall background is black with intricate intertwining floral work unifying the whole cover. Another larger lacquer-painted paper-mâché cover (plate 125) which was probably made in Isfahan contains a scene of a large number of people probably engaged in a wedding celebration. The bride and bridegroom are depicted on horseback surrounded by veiled women and men carrying tambourines, lanterns and what may be intended to be fireworks.

A prince on horseback in hunting attire with a hawk in his hand and two dogs is shown on a large bookcover which is embossed and painted under a lacquered surface of dark varnish (plate 114). This painting is of the eighteenth century Isfahan school and the size of the cover suggests that possibly it may have been intended as an alhûfe, or writing-board.

The Victoria and Albert Museum is fortunate in possessing a volume of the works of the great Persian poet Sa'dī which has lacquer covers painted with versions of the pictures by Ağa Sîdîq in the Chihil Sutun Palace at Isfahan. This manuscript (plate 120) was written in Shiraz between 1857-59 and contains some fine examples of calligraphy and illuminated headings. Like the bindings on plates 121 and 122 the outside front cover depicts the decisive victory of Nādir Shīh at the battle of Karnal with portraits of Nādir Shīh on horseback and Muhammad Shīh in a howdah on an elephant. The outside rear cover shows the battle between Shah Ismā'īl and the Ottoman Sultan Selim I at Chaldiran in August 1514 which effectively checked the power of the Persians in the west and neutralized the attraction exerted by them on the tribes of eastern Anatolia. The insides of the covers are also of interest. The inner front cover shows Sa'dī surrounded by his pupils while the rear inner cover depicts another great Persian poet, Hīfī, with his disciples. Both these paintings are of extraordinary delicacy, the former displaying a carpet and bowls of roses, a reference probably to the Gūsān or Rose Garden by Sa'dī, the latter with a very detailed background.

A volume containing eight pages of calligraphy (see plate 126) has lacquer painted covers. These probably date from the mid-nineteenth century and are decorated with flowers including carnations and tulips. Two detached lacquer covers (see plate 127) are painted with scenes in relief. One cover shows an enthroned prince approached by an old man, the other depicts a prince with courtiers bringing him food. Although these paintings are done in a Timurid style, they are almost certainly nineteenth century paintings produced in an earlier manner.
Plate 77

77. A bound manuscript, Persian, the Mansur or mystical poem in six books of Mawla Jalal al-Din Rumi (born at Balkh 1207, died at Konya 1273); 301 ff., written in fine black naskhi script in four columns, 23 lines to each column; ornamental initial headings in gold, gold ruled margins, illuminated double frontispiece and 8 illuminated chapter headings; contemporary binding of leather over paper pasteboards, exterior covers blind stamped. Interior covers with leather filigree work over gold and blue painted corner-pieces and central medallion. 262 mm x 175 mm. 16th Sha'ban and 6th Ramadhan, 687, 6 May and 25 May 1465. (In the possession of the present-day Tabrīz.)

Plate 78

78. A bound manuscript, Persian, Kūdīh-i Chihīl Bādī or Forty Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic, with paraphrase in Persian quatrains by Jāmī, transcribed by Sultan Ahmad Haravi, 10 ff., (2 blank), written in naskhi script, 13 lines to each page; illuminated headpiece, gold ruled and green painted margins; binding of leather over paper pasteboards, exterior covers gold block-stamped with sunk medallions and corner-pieces, interior covers with blind tooling and cabled leather border and ruled margins. 199 mm x 121 mm. (In the possession of the present-day Tabrīz.)

The calligraphy is dated 1481 but the binding may be of a later date.
79. A bound manuscript, Persian; the Kulliyat, or complete works, of Shaykh Sa'di Shírází, or Shaykh Musáfí al-Dín Sa'dí al-Shírází (born in Shiraz, c. 1315); 453 ff. (4 blank); written in fine black nasta'í script, 17 lines to each page; chapter headings in white dahsuh on gold and painted grounds; gold and blue ruled margins; 1 double-page frontispiece of gold, blue and other colours; binding of leather over paper pasteboards; exterior black leather covers gold block-stamped; interior red leather covers with gold and black paper filigree work over blue painted grounds.

250 mm x 145 mm
Persia, Shiraz, c. 1500
Ms.I. 11-1901
The spine of the binding has been replaced and there is no envelope flap. The exterior and interior covers have gold stamped and gold painted borders. The medallions and corner-pieces on the exterior covers have stamped floral decoration. Much of the filigree tracer of the medallion and corner-pieces of the interior covers has come off.

80. A bound manuscript, Persian; the Qur'an; 373 ff. (2 blank), written in black dashed script, 11 lines to each page, transcribed by Sayyid Asád Aghá al-Kirmani (i.e. of Kirman), decorated in red, gold and illuminated marginal ornaments and ruled margins; elaborately illuminated gold and blue double title-page; decorated chapter headings and gold illuminated finispiece; binding (no flap) of leather over pasteboard, gold block-stamped.

343 mm x 230 mm
Persia, probably Kirman, 912/1506-7
696/1396
The design of both the outer and inner covers, which appear to be original and contemporary, shows how close Turkish binding styles were to early sixteenth century Persian work.
81. A bound manuscript Persian, the Divan of Awhad al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad Khwāriżmī, called Amrū (one of the court poets of the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar [d. 1157]): 306 ff. (1 blank), written in black nasta‘īq, in two columns, 21 lines to each column, ornamental 'unwān and headings in blue; 9 miniature paintings, half-page; blindtooled and stamped leather binding with no flap; floral patterned marbled end-papers.

192 mm x 100 mm
Persia, Jāhān 721/August 1515
169-1923

(previous page)
Plate 80

82. A bound manuscript Persian, the Pānja Gānī or Five Treasures of Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmi (born at Jām 1314, died 1392), transcribed by Nīr Rawḍ of Herat for the Sultan 'Abd al-Latif of Bukhara: 362 ff. (5 blank), written in fine black nasta'īq script in two columns, 17 or 18 lines to each column, with an outer column of commentary written at an angle; 5 illuminated headings, gold ruled margins, blue floral decorations; binding of leather over paper pasteboard with flap incorrectly remounted at a later stage at the front; exterior covers of black leather with gold block-stamped central panel and smaller border panels, interior covers of red leather with gold block-stamped border and central panel with medallions and corner-pieces decorated with black leather filigree over blue paper ground, spine repaired.

240 mm x 154 mm
Persia, Jumākā 714/Abūl 950/September 1543
380-1885
83. A bound manuscript; Persian; Khalilun
al-Khansah or Extracts from the Khansah
(i.e. five epic poems) by Shaykh Nizami
Ganjavi, transcribed by Ibrahim al-Khath and
illuminated by 'Abd al-Latif (60 f., written in
very fine nasta'liq script in two columns, 10
lines to each column; elaborately
illuminated borders and 5 illuminated
headings, illuminated medallion on title-
page; gold-ruled margins and multi-coloured
gold-sprinkled paper throughout; binding
of leather over paper pasteboards; exterior
covers lacquer painted with sunk medallions
and corner-pieces; interior covers gold
block-stamped and leather filigree work
over paper ground; gold painted end-papers
formed of strips of different colours joined
together.
104 mm x 125 mm
Persia, 961/1553 (date in chronogram)
618-1686
The exterior black covers and envelope flap have
very delicate gold and green painted floral patterns
and gold block-stamped medallions and corner-
pieces of a very high quality. The interior red
leather covers have gold canebound borders round
the gold block-stamped panels and an inner panel
with gold and black leather filigree design on a
blue painted paper ground.

Plate 83 (previous page)

84. A bound manuscript; Persian; the Rashad
al-Salti' or Garden of Purity of Muhammad b.
Khwand Shab b. Mahmid or Mir Khwain
(born 1433/1434, died at Bahli 1490); the
work is a general history of the world in
seven books from the Creation to the time of
the author and this single volume contains
Books 5 and 6 which cover the period from
Jenghiz Khan (born 1154) to the Sultan Abi
Sadd (died 1355); 420 f. (2空白), written in
black nasta'liq script, 29 lines to each page;
illuminated double frontispiece and two
illuminated 'urwain, gold ruled and painted
margins; leather binding with no flap,
exterior covers gold block-stamped, interior
covers with gold tooled and gold painted
titles and gold paper filigree work over
blue, green, red and black ground.
561 mm x 240 mm
Persia, 976/1567-71
674-1376

Plate 84

85. A bound manuscript; Persian; the Timur
Namah or Book of Timur by 'Abd Allah Haiffi
(born in Kharj, died 1521. He was the
nephew of the poet Jami); The Timur Namah,
also known as the Zulal Namah, is an epic
poem celebrating the conquests of Timur
(Tamerlane). 126 f., written in black
nasta'liq in two columns, 14 lines to each
column, illuminated 'urwain and margins,
gold chapter heading; miniature paintings
(1 damaged) and a double illustrated
frontispiece, all full-page; leather binding
with stamped and filigree work.
226 mm x 140 mm
Persia, 994/1586
699-1687
The binding has been repaired and is lacking its
original spine and fore-edge flap. The exterior
covers and envelope flap have gilded and painted
block-stamped medallions and corner pieces
which are inlaid and deep set. The doubutsu
contain medallions and corner pieces ornamented
with gold paper filigree work over a blue and red
paper ground.

Plate 85
86. A bound manuscript, Persian; no title but the work is in the Nīn va Ḩalwā or Bread and Sweetmeats by Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Āndilī, called Bahāʾ (born 1547, died 1621), transcribed by ‘Imād al-Ḥusaynī. The volume is a mānāvī on ascetic life which formed a kind of introduction to the mānāvī of Jaḥāl al-Dīn Rāmī, iii/ii (17 ff., 3 blank), written in fine black nastaʿlīq script in two columns, 11 lines to each column; illuminations, including an ornamental 'awānī, headings in blue and red naskh, florally decorated borders and gold ruled margins; thin leather binding with no pastedown backing; exterior covers stamped and with leather filigree work in panels, interior covers with paper and leather filigree. 174 mm x 115 mm

Persia, 958/1548-99

357:1695

Al-Āndilī migrated from Syria, where he was born, to Persia, and obtained an honoured place at the court of the great Safavid ruler, Shāh ‘Abdāl (1587-1629). The binding is contemporary with the dated manuscript and stylistically though unusual, is typical in its technique of works of this period. The exterior covers have an outer border of gold cablework and an inner border comprising panels with red leather filigree floral patterns pasted on a gold ground. The central rectangular panel has a brown leather border cut and pasted down. The design of the panel is of scalloped lines crossing over a gold ground, with green and gold flowers in the spaces so formed. The interior covers of red leather have corner-pieces of gold leather filigree on a blue paper ground and a central scalloped medallion with similar filigree work on a green paper ground. The smaller decorative additions on the vertical axis have white paper filigree work over a brown ground.

87. A bound manuscript, Persian; Laylā va Majnūn, a mānāvī or rhyming poem on the love story of Laylā and Majnūn, by Mīrza Qāsim Jānābī, known as Qāsimī, transcribed by ‘the sīnaḥ sarvār’ Mullā Mir Bāḥshāz; 110 ff. (1 blank), written in fine black nastaʿlīq script in two columns, 12 lines to each column; gold-rulled margins and gold and painted 'awānī, gold-sprinkled and various coloured papers; 5 full-page miniatures in style of finest paintings, binding of leather over paper pastedboards gold block-stamped on exterior and gold painted on interior. 195 mm x 118 mm

Persia, Khurasan, late 16th century

359:1695
88. A cover of a bookbinding, leather over paper pasteboards; gold block-stamping and gold painting.
232 mm x 152 mm
Persia, style of Herat, 15th/16th century
1953-1981
The exterior cover has a border of gold painted fillets and gold painted knotted work. The main panel has gold block-stamped corner-pieces and a central scalloped medallion with a gold painted outline with radiating flecks. The medallion depicts two winged deer enenewed within floral work. The corner-pieces are decorated with deer on a background of foliate design. The doublures have been removed but traces of a gold border and blue paper corner-pieces remain.
90. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior cover block-stamped with blind and gold tooling; interior cover blind and gold tooled with leather filigree work.
251 mm x 198 mm
Persia, Herat, probably 16th century
1934-1981
The brown leather exterior cover has a border of blind tooled and gold filled fillets; an inner border is composed of compartments outlined in gold which have stamped floral decoration. The main panel has scalloped corner pieces and a scalloped central medallion with the outlines painted in gold tooling. The medallion and corner pieces have stamped floral design. The red leather interior cover has blind tooled and gold pasted fillets. The central scalloped medallion comprises brown leather filigree work in leaf forms over a blue paper ground. The medallion has a gold leather filigree border and three inner sections outlined in gold on green and gold painted paper grounds.

90. A bound manuscript; Persian; an album of eight paper folios of calligraphy.
attributed to the royal scribe, Mir 'Ali; exterior covers and envelope flap of leather with gold block-stamping; doublures of leather with inlaid paper filigree work.
232 mm x 157 mm
Persia, probably Tabriz or Shiraz; early 16th century
1953-1975
The upper and lower covers and the envelope flap are similarly decorated. The main panel is bordered by six narrow panels with stamped flowers and tendrils. Quatrefoils are placed at the corners and between the panels. The inner panel is stamped in relief with a tree at the base of which are rabbits. These birds are perched on the tree and a duck and a crow are shown flying above between clouds of a strong Far Eastern inspiration. The doublures are of brown leather with a gold painted outline. A central scalloped medallion has inlaid gold paper filigree work on a multicoloured paper ground of red, blue, green and black. The medallion is repeated in the corner pieces. Two extensions to the medallion on the vertical axis consist of black paper filigree work over a green ground.

92. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers gold painted with leather filigree work; interior covers gold painted.
241 mm x 322 mm
Persia, style of Herat, 16th/17th century
1567-1720
The exterior crimson leather covers have a gold stamped and painted border. The main panels have delicately gold painted beams, flowers and trellis in one lion is shown stalking a deer while the other has a horned dragon climbing a tree. Flying dragons and Chinese cloud forms are depicted at the top of both panels. The centre of each exterior cover has a scalloped medallion with an inlaid black leather border and black leather flowers on a white paper ground. Two gazelles in red leather stand out against the ground. The corner pieces have white paper filigree floral work on a black ground. The interior covers of brown leather have a double border of two gold painted fillets. The covers have been mounted at a recent date by a modern red leather spine.

93. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers gold block-stamped and gold painted; interior covers gold tooled and gold painted.
235 mm x 125 mm
Persia, style of Herat, 16th/17th century
1564 & 1566/1572
The exterior brown leather covers are similarly decorated. The main panels depict a variety of wild beasts and some birds among trees and flowers all delicately painted in gold. A central medallion with additional motifs on the vertical axis and corner pieces are gold block-stamped with flowers picked out in brown. The interior red leather covers have a simple border of blind tooling and gold tooled fillets and a small motif of gold tooled meshwork at the centre. The markings lines can be seen scored on the leather to assist the binder.
94. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; lacquer painted exterior covers and leather doublures over paper pasteboards.
462 mm x 345 mm
Probable Herat, Persia, late 16th or early 17th century
595 & 595A-1888 (13.)
This pair of large bookcovers was acquired in 1881 at St. Petersburg as the covers of a scrap book of paintings and calligraphy. The exterior covers are decorated with scenes of animals, dragons and birds in a landscape of trees and a stream. Much of this is of Far Eastern inspiration. The red leather doublures have scalloped medallions and corner pieces with gold paper filigree over a multicoloured paper ground and a gold tooled and gold cablework border.

95. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; gold block-stamping and gold painting.
240 mm x 168 mm
Persia, probably Qazwin or Isfahan, late 16th century
1735 & 1735A-1981
The exterior brown leather covers have a delicate outer border of stamped gold 5-shapes and a thin gold painted fillet. The main panel has a gold block-stamped scalloped medallion with two flying geese and clouds of Far Eastern inspiration. Similarly decorated medallions are above and below the medallion. The interior red leather covers have a border of two gold fillets.

96. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers gold block-stamped and painted; interior covers gold block-stamped with paper filigree work.
429 mm x 277 mm
Persia, late 16th century
163 & 263A-1899
The exterior covers and envelope flap have a border of gold block-stamped panels with floral work painted out in red, pink and blue. These panels are bordered by gold painted fillets. The main panel is gold block-stamped with a central scalloped medallion and decorated in the same manner as the border panels. The fore-edge flap has an inscription from the Qur'an (Sura 56, al-Waqi'ah or The Great Event, vv. 77-80). This reads: Verily, it is an honoured Qur'an, in a book that is protected. None shall touch it save the purified ones; a revelation by the Lord of the Worlds.
The interior covers and envelope flap have a double border, the outer containing panels of leather filigree over multi-coloured paper ground, the inner containing a gold block-stamped Qur'anic inscription. This is from Sura al-Baqarah or The Cow, v. 225 i.e. the Ayat al-Kursi or Throne Verse. It reads:
Allah is He besides whom there is no God, the living, the self-subduing by whom all subsides, slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep, whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His who is in that can interfere with Him but by His permission! He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases; His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High the Great.
The inscription finishes from Sura 45, al-jahiyah or The Knowing, v. 29.
This is Our book that speaks against you with Justice, surely we wrote what you did.
The inscription on the envelope flap doublure is from Sura 55, al-ahdaib or The Allies, v. 56. It reads:
Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet, O ye who believe! Call for blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation. Thus God the Most High, the Almighty has spoken the truth.
The main panel is gold block-stamped with floral decoration similar to that on the outer covers. The central medallions and corner pieces have gold leather filigree over a blue ground. The fore-edge flap is decorated with panels of gold leather filigree over green and blue grounds.
97. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers gold painted and gold block-stamped; interior covers of leather filigree and gold painted.

245 mm x 175 mm

Persia, possibly Herat, late 16th or early 17th century 425-424 AH/1611-1610 AD

The black leather exterior covers have a border of plain and gold fillets and gold block-stamped panels with floral decoration picked out in blue. The main panel has a gold block-stamped central scalloped medallion and corner pieces decorated in the same manner as the border panels. The black leather ground has gold painted floral work. The envelope flap is similarly decorated. The fore-edge flap has two rectangular panels outlined with gold painted fillets and filled with gold painted floral work and two gold block-stamped panels. There is an inscription in nasta’liq which reads:

The letter of your acceptance is the title page of our happiness, for the alchemy of happiness is the acceptance of the people of purity.

The interior covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated. A border of gold painted fillets surrounds the main panel of black leather which contains a central scalloped medallion with additional decorative motifs on the vertical axis and horizontal axis and corner pieces. These are all decorated with black and gold leather filigree on a blue painted ground. The fore-edge flap contains panels of identical decoration within gold painted compartments.
98. A bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers block-stamped and lacquer painted; interior covers gold painted with leather filigree work.

500 mm x 169 mm
Persia, 16th/17th century
891-1898

The exterior covers and flaps are similarly decorated. The main part has gold floral work painted on a black ground and covered with a clear lacquer surface. The inner panel has a gold block-stamped scalloped medallions at the centre and corner-pieces. All these have the highlights of the design picked out in black paint and the flowers in red, blue and pink with green leaves. The fore-edge flap has panels of gold painted floral work on the leather matching it to the envelope flap and lower cover. The red leather interior covers and flaps have identical decoration. A series of border panels, gold painted with delicate stamped floral work, is edged with gold cablework and gold tooled fillets. The main panels have an all-over gold painted floral design and scalloped medallions outlined in gold with delicate brown leather filigree patterns over an ultramarine ground.
109. A famed manuscript Persian. The upper rows are over papier-maché. The lower are over paper, both inlaid with gold and decorated with designs of plants and flowers. Other inlaid and decorated objects are described in the text. Plate 141.

110. A famed manuscript Persian. The upper rows are over papier-maché. The lower are over paper, both inlaid with gold and decorated with designs of plants and flowers. Other inlaid and decorated objects are described in the text. Plate 141.

111. A famed manuscript Persian. The upper rows are over papier-maché. The lower are over paper, both inlaid with gold and decorated with designs of plants and flowers. Other inlaid and decorated objects are described in the text. Plate 141.

112. A famed manuscript Persian. The upper rows are over papier-maché. The lower are over paper, both inlaid with gold and decorated with designs of plants and flowers. Other inlaid and decorated objects are described in the text. Plate 141.
103. A bound manuscript; Persian; the story of Khusew and Shirin of Sheykh Nizámí Ganjavi, or Nizám al-Dín Abu Muhammad Iyyúb b. Yusuf (born in Ganja 1140–41, died 599/1202–3); 250 ff., written in fine nasta’liq script, 14 lines to each page, by ‘Abd al-Jabbár 1091–1630 (‘Abd al-Jabbár was a famous calligraphist in the reign of Shah ‘Abbás II (1612–1666) and a pupil of ‘Abd il-Táhir). 19 miniature paintings, including 1 detached by Ridá-yi ‘Abbásí, dated 6 Safar 1042/23 August 1632; binding of red leather over paper pasted boards; exterior covers gold block-stamped and printed; interior covers of leather filigree and incised leather work; binding signed by Muhammad Mubhsín of Tabriz.

246 mm x 140 mm
Persia, Tabriz, c. 1680
304–1885

The exterior covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated. A border of gold block-stamped compartments and quadrants with floral decoration surround the main panel which has a gold block-stamped overall floral design with a hawk attacking a gazelle in the central eight-lobed medallion. The corner-pieces contain ducks, rabbits and foxes from which most of the pink and green paint has rubbed off. The fore-edge flap has gold block-stamped panels with a central green panel on which the title of the book is written. The interior covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated. Gold leather filigree floral patterns are placed on red, blue and green grounds. Incised and incised leather work fills the side sections of the main panel. An eight-lobed gold block-stamped medallion is at the centre. The binding is signed on four small roundels on the interior front and rear covers. This reads:
The work of Muhammad Mubhsín of Tabriz.
104. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior black leather covers gold block-stamped and painted; interior red leather covers blind tooled; gold block-stamped and paper filigree work.

342 mm x 242 mm
Persia, 17th century
256 & 256A-1885
The exterior covers have a border of gold block-stamped panels in rectangular and quatrefoil shape filled with flowers and stems. (See also No. 113.) This border is edged on both sides with tooled fillers and gold painted S-shapes. The main panel is gold block-stamped with patterns comparable with those in the border panels. The panel has been made from two impressions with a carefully disguised horizontal joint at the centre. The overall design is of a medallion tapering to smaller medallions above and below on the vertical axis and repeated in the corner pieces. On the upper cover these elements are highlighted in pale green. The interior covers have a border of panels in rectangular and quatrefoil shape with black and gold leather filigree on a blue paper ground. An interior border is gold block-stamped with panels containing flowers and stems. Both these borders are edged with tooled fillers and gold stamped S-shapes. The design of main panel echoes that of the exterior covers. The medallion, extended mouth, and corner pieces are of the same size and decorated with black and gold leather filigree on a blue paper ground. The outermost border panel of the upper cover is missing at the side adjoining the spine.

105. The fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior black leather gold block-stamped; interior red leather with gold painting, tooled and former filigree work.

Height 357 mm
Persia, 17th/18th century
256-1885
The fore-edge flap contains four rectangular panels each 71 mm long containing an untranslatable verse inscription in ligature script. This reads:
The coin that Pindaros of Tras set in poetry.
Last you should think that someone among the Persians set it there.
First poetry came from above the throne upon the earth.
He once again brought it from the earth and placed it on the throne.

The panels are bordered by multiple fillers and gold painted S-shapes. The envelope flap contains a similar border to a series of alternating rectangular and quatrefoil shaped stamped panels which contain flowers and stems. The main part of the flap has a section of a stamped scalloped medallion at the point of the flap and corner pieces. These are decorated with flowers and stems. The doublures of red leather have gold tooled and painted fillers and panels of inlaid blue paper from which all the gold and black leather filigree is missing.
106. The lower cover of a bookbinding;  
papier-maché over board, lacquer painted.  
245 mm x 144 mm  
Persia, 17th/18th century  
7004.1876  
The outside of the cover has a central panel with a  
dark red ground on which are painted wolves,  
boars, a dragon, a dasturb (the Persian  
mythological bird), and a duck all between  
trees and flowers. These are outlined in gold. An outer  
framing panel with gold painted fillets has a black  
ground with gold painted floral work. The  
double-page has a border panel of repeating gold  
monkeys on a black ground which frames the large  
central panel. This is painted red with a gold  
painted roundel of irregular shape at the centre.  
The lining extensions on the vertical and horizontal  
axes are repeated in the four corner decorations.

107. The upper and lower covers of a  
bookbinding; leather over paper  
pasteboards; exterior covers of red leather  
with leather filigree over blue and white  
grounds; interior cover (one only) of gold  
painted leather and incised leather filigree  
work over a green silk ground.  
292/295 mm x 178 mm  
Persia, 17th/18th century  
366 & 366A.1895  
The exterior covers have identical decoration. A  
gold painted border of 5-shapes and alternating gold  
line frame the main panel which contains a  
scale-shaped medallion consisting of gold and black  
leather filigree work on a blue paper ground set  
in the leather. Decorative extensions on the  
vertical axis and the corner-pieces have gold and  
black leather filigree work over a white paper  
ground. The one remaining interior cover has  
been badly damaged by damp. It is decorated with  
a gold painted border of plain fillets and two  
sections of close geometric interlace. This border  
and the main panel is of paper; the main panel  
having elaborate gold painted swirling stems. The  
central scale-shaped medallion, the additional  
decorative motifs on the vertical and horizontal  
axes and the corner-pieces all have gold painted  
leather filigree framework over a green silk ground  
with floral patterns and pairs of monsters and beasts  
in the corner-pieces.
108. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding: exterior covers of red leather with gold tooling and black and gold paper filigree work; interior covers of black leather with gold leather filigree work on a multicoloured ground.

294 mm x 167 mm

Persia, style of Shiraz, 17th/18th century

1786-1802

The exterior covers have a border of gold fillers and gold cahemire design. The main panel has a scalloped mandorla and corner pieces set into the leather. These all have gold paper filigree work on a blue printed paper ground. Additional motifs on the vertical and horizontal axes have black paper work on a white ground. A white paper label on a black spine of later date is partly illegible but states that this is a Diram or album of script of Shah Mohyol. The decoration of the medallions and corner pieces of the interior covers is comparable to No. 107. Birds, wolves and trees are shown on ultramarine leather filigree work on blue, red and green paper grounds. These were almost certainly the original outer covers which have been reused and reversed. This is also probably when the black spine was attached.

109. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; gold block-stamping and traces of gold painting.

378 mm x 265 mm

Persia, 17th century/18th century


The exterior covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated. A border of gold painted fillers frames an inner border of stamped compartments and quatrefoils which have gold block-stamped sections of leather pasted on the cover. The main inner panel has corner pieces and a central scalloped medallion done in the same manner. There are two additional motifs above and below the medallion on the vertical axes. These closest to the medallion have incised red leather pasted on with smaller pieces of gold block-stamped leather on top. The interior red covers have a border of black painted fillers. As with No. 107, this binding is useful in showing how aspects of decoration were carried out.
110. A bookcover; exterior covers of painted lacquer work over paper pastebords and gold block-stamping; interior covers of leather filigree over paper and gold tooling.

Height 196 mm x 108 mm

Pékin, early 18th century
702 & 702a-1785

The upper cover, the fore edge flap and envelope flap are similarly decorated. The main part consists of gold sinuous floral stems and flowers painted on a black ground covered with clear lacquer. A central scalloped medallion with two extensions on the vertical axis and corner pieces are gold block-stamped. These have two-quarternial motif which are painted light green. Some blue paint on the flowers remains. The doublures of red leather have a border with gold painted fillers and triple gold-tooled fillers. The central panel consists of delicate red leather filigree floral stems on a blue paper ground. This is painted with small gold floral stems.

111. The envelope flap of a book binding; leather over paper pastebords; exterior black leather gold block-stamped; interior red leather with gold leather and paper filigree work.

Height 282 mm

Pékin, early 18th century
355-1785

The exterior cover has gold block-stamped panels bordered with gold painted margins. Remains of gold painted flowers can also be seen. The main part of the flap has gold block-stamped corner pieces at the point of the flap and on the horizontal axis a gold block-stamped motif filled with a flower. The interior cover has panels set in a similar border. The panels have gold paper filigree work on a multi coloured paper ground. The red, brown and black colours are unusual. The main part of the flap has gold filigree work of floral design on a black ground. Much of the leather filigree is missing.

112. The fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding; black leather over paper pastebords; gold stamping and paper filigree work.

Height 289 mm

Pékin, 18th century
345-1885

The fore-edge flap has a gold border of interlocking S-shapes and an inner painted gold line which frames five compartments, three of which are filled block-stamped using gold paper filigree work on a red ground. The envelope flap has a gold border of paper block-stamped panels and an inner border of panels of gold paper filigree over multi-coloured paper and gilt ground. The main panel is gold block-stamped in two sections (the horizontal join being barely visible at the centre). The doublures are similarly decorated but with filigree work and less block-stamping.
115. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; leather over paper panes, exterior covers gold block-stamped; interior covers gold block-stamped with gold leather filigree over a multi-coloured paper ground.

347 mm x 226 mm
Persia, 18th century
730-7320, 1889

The exterior covers have borders of gold-painted S-shapes on either side of alternating rectangular and quadrilateral shaped gold block-stamped panels. These are filled with elaborate floral designs. The main panel is a gold block-stamped in two halves (the horizontal joins is clearly visible). The design consists of a central scalloped medallion and corner-pieces, all florally decorated within a border of a raised fillet and extended floral decoration. (See also No. 181.) The interior covers have gold-painted fillets between an outer border of panels of gold leather filigree over green, red and blue paper ground and an inner border of gold block-stamped and florally decorated panels. The main panel is heavily gold block-stamped with a central scalloped medallion and corner-pieces with gold leather filigree work on red and blue paper ground.

(Previous page)

Plate 113

Plate 115

Plate 114

116. A cover of a bookbinding; paper-mâché, relief painted and lacquered.

462 mm x 524 mm
Persia, Isphahan, 18th century
1220-1231

The red border on the outer cover has gold-painted fillets and floral decoration. The main green-painted panel depicts a young prince on horseback in hunting attire with a hawk on his gloved left hand and two dogs running beside the horse. A brick building and trees are in the background. The painting of the face is particularly fine. At the top of the panel is a name Visel Block. It is not clear to whom this refers since the artist's name is given in a small scalloped panel on the left. This reads 'The work of Muhammad'. The inner cover has a black painted border surrounding a plain ochre panel. It is unusual to find such deep relief work on a binding and it is possible that this may have been used as a writing board or pad for support.
115. A bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers painted with a surface of clear lacquer; interior covers of leather filigree work.

297 mm x 200 mm
Persia, probably Isfahan, late 18th/early 19th century.
417 & 417A-1886

The exterior covers are similarly decorated. A gold fillet painted on red leather surrounds the major part of the cover which has a gold painted background. On this is a border of red, hatched with gold which contains a panel of stylised leaves and flowers in pink and blue. The main panel is decorated with a bird (possibly a bull finch) on the upper cover in front of a magnolia and apple blossom. Hyacinth, irises, two tulips, pomegranate and violas or pansies are also shown, as are a number of flying insects. These vary slightly in size on the two exterior covers. The spine is of plain red leather while the fore-edge flap has a gold painted panel with gold painted leaves. The envelope flap contains the border and part of the magnolia and fruit blossom, as depicted on the upper and lower covers. The interior covers and inside of the envelope flap (all of red leather) have a border of gold-stamped 5 shapes and panels with inlaid gold leather manuscript script with white gold painted leaves. The text which is identical in the six panels of both inside covers reads:

From what happy flower-garden is this drunken peacock?
From what rose-bed did this fairy creature arise with rose-spray in hand?
Has the new spring planted colourful flowers in bunches in the meadow?
Or has a well-winged and well-flighted partridge alighted on the rose-bush?
Good news for the people of speech, good news for the masters of divine gnosis!
The command of the Shahanshah has fostered a binding on this collection.

At the corners of this border are quatrefoils formed of gold leather filigree over a blue paper ground. The main panel has a background of white gauzek (the intense white produced by alkali tanning) with inlaid leather in brown, gold, green and red (with gold painted highlights) forming an elaborate and somewhat stylised image of roses with rose in flower and a rose bud. The inside of the fore-edge flap is decorated with gold painted leaves.
116. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; exterior covers of paper-maché with lacquer painting over paper pasteboards; interior covers of leather with gold block-stamping and paper filigrine work over paper and material ground.

298 mm x 128 mm
Persia, probably late 18th century
356 & 560A 1985

The exterior covers are identical though the lower cover has lost much of its lacquer. A gold painted border of floral lattice work on a black ground surrounds the main panel which contains of birds, flowers and leaves painted on a reddish gold ground. The whole is covered with a surface of clear lacquer. The interior black leather covers have a border of panels with gold paper filigrine work on red and blue paper grounds and green material ground. Gold painted fillets surround the main panel which is gold block-stamped with flying dragons and flowers. At the centre is a scalloped medallion with gold paper filigrine work on a multi-coloured ground. The corner pieces and extensions on the vertical and, also unusually, the horizontal axis are similarly decorated.

117. The lower cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; block-stamping.
322 mm x 198 mm
Persia, 18th/19th century
1954 5081

The exterior cover has been stamped in preparation for gilding or painting. It is valuable in that it shows an early stage in the process of decoration. The interior cover has blue paper painted down.

118. A small bound manuscript: Persian; the Qur'an, 256 ff. (4 Manks), written in Arabic in small black naskh, 17 lines to each page, diacritics in red, chapter headings in gold, gold ruled margins, full-page ornamental gold and coloured 'luqarri, including Nasif al-Farabi; opening of Surat al-Baqara; missing; lacquer painted exterior binding, double cover of red leather with gold painting; mottled yellow end-papers.

94 mm x 58 mm
Persia, probably Shiraz, c. 1800
170 1923
119. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; lacquer painted wooden boards.
350 mm x 208 mm
Southern Persia, 1210/3805-1
1328 and 1524-1889 (L.D.)
The exterior covers have an elaborate foliately decorated borders and central panels with gold floral patterns. The scalloped medallions show a gentleman and a lady against a stylised architectural background. Both these figures are wearing European dress. The additional scalloped motifs show a hawk attacking a duck in flight. The interior covers are similarly decorated with nightingales and other birds among flowers which include roses and irises. 122-1889 is dated 1818 and has an inscription stating that it was drawn by The Most Humble before God Vardé Ahdar. 1328-1889 has an inscription, also in nastaʿlīq which says that the picture was finished by Husayn Quli Khan.

120. A bound manuscript; Persian, the Kasūlat or Complete Works of Shaykh Mustūlī al-Su'dī (b. Būrānī, 1381-1423), 299 ff., written in nastaʿlīq script by Māhub b. Muhammad of Shiraz; some Arabic quatrains in naskh script; 8 illuminated headings; covers of papier-maché over boards; lacquer painted with exterior scenes based on paintings by Ṭāhir Sādiqī on the west wall of the Great Hall in the Chihil Sutun Palace at Isfahan.
237 mm x 145 mm
Persia, Shiraz or Isfahan, 1252/5186-9
697-1767
The exterior covers are painted and covered with a clear lacquer surface. The upper cover depicts the battle of Karnal in 1759 between the Persian military ruler, Nādir Shāh (1739-1747) and Muhammad Shah, the Mogul Sultan of Delhi (1702-1714). Nādir Shāh is shown on horseback while Muhammad Shah rides an elephant. The lower cover shows the battle at Chaldiran in 1514 between Shah Ismāʾil I the first Safavid ruler of Persia (1502-1524) and the Ottoman Sultan Selim (1467-1520), also known as 'The Grim' and father of Solṭān I the Magnificent. Shah Ismāʾil is on the far right, shown casing in two the Ottoman Janissary Āgha before Selim who is on the far right. The inner covers are lacquer painted. The inside of the upper cover depicts the port Su'dī and a group of his pupils while the inside of the lower cover shows the Persian poet Hūrī (died at Shiraz in 1389) seated with disciples.

Plate 120 (previous page)

121. The lower cover of a bookbinding; papier-maché with lacquer painting.
321 mm x 222 mm
Persia, probably Isfahan, early 19th century
1827-1822
The exterior cover is decorated with a brightly coloured painting of the Persian ruler Nādir Shāh (1687-1747) attacking Mohammad Shāh of India at the battle of Karnal (24 February 1759). This defeat marked the disintegration of the Mogul Empire. The Sultan of Delhi had to cede to Nādir Shāh all the provinces north of the River Indus and pay vast sums in money and jewels. In addition the Koh-i-Nur diamond and the Peacock Throne were forfeited and the people of Persia thereby exempted from taxation for three years. A border of gold painted floral work on a black ground has red panels with an inscription in white naskh script which reads:

To lower than the fish and from higher than the moon
Wear the point of the spear and cause the dome of the palace
The beginning of night had the beginning of throne and of plunder;
At dawn neither body had beard nor bend crowns.

With one turning of the blue heavens
Neither Nādir remained in place nor a follower of Nādir.
If this is also from the Rustam-like quatrains
We must weep not for the dead but for the living.
The dark sanded of the king scratched and covered
With his hoof the face of the fish, and with his tail the face of the moon.
The interior cover is black with a border of double fillers in gold. Both sides are covered with clear lacquer.

Plate 121
123. The upper cover of a bookbinding; papier-mâché with lacquer painting.

Persia, probably Isfahan, early 19th century 1828-1822

This is a companion cover to No. 121. Apart from a few minor differences the main panel shows the same scene but the painting is reversed with Mīhrāb Shīh shown attacking from the right of the picture. The inscription and interior cover are identical. Both these covers were presented to the Museum by Mrs A C Charrington.

124. The lower cover of a bookbinding; papier-mâché with lacquer painting.

Persia, probably Isfahan, early 19th century 1830-1852

This is the companion cover to No. 123. The main panel shows Shah 'Abbās II (reigned 1642-66 and the grandson of Shah 'Abbās I) with Khalil Soleh, the ambassador from India. The painting is a version of one in the Chihil Sutun Palace, Isfahan which is illustrated on plate 75 by Charles Tectier, Description de l'Empire, la Perse et la Mongolie, Paris, 1842. The painting is edged with compartments which are filled with flowers and gold quatrefoil shapes which have been written on them.

May the Lord of the Age, the Shah, be victorious!
May the dust of sorrow be obliterated from your countenance!
With praise to God, O Sovereign with the seal-ring of Jumā'ī Sīyāsī.
The banquet of Shah 'Abbās (followed by an unintelligible word)

The interior cover has a black ground with elaborate gold floral work. The central scalloped medallion and corner pieces are gold with red and white roses. Two panels above and below the central medallion read:

The work of Haji 'Abd al-Razūq of Isfahan, in the year 1874.

This dating, equivalent to 2399 in the Christian era, is clearly impossible. Furthermore, it is too early even to refer to the original wall painting in Isfahan.

125. The upper cover of a bookbinding; papier-mâché with lacquer painting.

Persia, probably Isfahan, early 19th century 1829-1832

This is the companion cover to No. 121. Apart from a few minor differences the main panel shows the same scene but the painting is reversed with Mīhrāb Shīh shown attacking from the right of the picture. The inscription and interior cover are identical. Both these covers were presented to the Museum by Mrs A C Charrington.

The banquet of Shah 'Abbās the Great.
The interior cover is similarly decorated to No. 123 and the inscription is identical. Both these covers were presented to the Museum by Mrs A C Charrington.
125. A cover of a bookbinding; papier-mâché with lacquer painting.
45 mm x 292 mm
Persia, Isfahan, 18th century
7388-1960
The main panel is painted with a scene of people, including some women within city walls. Some of the people are shown carrying loads, drums, tambourines and fireworks (?). The occasion portrayed is a wedding and the bride and groom are depicted on horseback. The border consists of compartments with an inscription from Ghazali No. 3 of Hfiz (transl. Wilberforce Clarke, 5, pp. 20-23), lines 1, 2, 7, 6, 8. This reads:
1 Snf (mashrabi) with the light of wine (dtrie lwe), upbake the cup of ours.
2 Manned (mashril) speak, saying: 'The world's work hath gone (agreably) ours.'
3 O thou word of knowledge of the joy of the perpetual wine-drinking of—ours.
4 O brented (biredithaths) come, when (after death) come on recollection of—ours.
5 O brented if thou past by the rose-bed of beloved ones.
6 Take care! Present to the beloved (the mashrabi) the message of—ours.
7 To the eye of our heart-binding beloved (the mashrabi) pleasing is intoxication
For that reason, to intoxication they (Fatim and Destrany) have the reins of—ours.

The interior cover originally was painted and covered with a clear lacquer surface but most of this has flaked off. The ten small cartouches in this border read:

Completed in .... Isfahan in the workshop of .... Asf Miral Muhammad Han an ...

126. A bound manuscript; Persian; an album of eight card folios, with fourteen specimens of calligraphy, mostly in a big script of scribes, including one signed and dated by Muhammad Yusuf Yari, 1234/1814; other attributions in pencil include 'Abd al-Hussain al-Lababini; exterior and interior covers of painted lacquer work over paper pastebords.
356 mm x 254 mm
Persia, probably Isfahan, 19th century
605 & 606a-1876
The marigold of the upper and lower covers are similarly decorated but the compositions are reversed. A deep red lacquer ground is laid on paper pastebords. On this are painted flora in the main panel and the frame which is defined by gold painted fillets. The framing panel contains alternating pink and green roses while the central panel depicts rose bushes with other flowers and buds. This has been covered with a clear lacquer surface. The inner upper and lower covers have a deep green lacquer ground with a single stemmed narcissus with six buds. A simple gold painted border frames the inner covers.

127. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; papier-mâché and lacquer painted.
179 mm x 137 mm
Persia, probably Isfahan, 19th century
1546 & 1548a-1913
The exterior covers have borders with an elaborately gold painted floral interface over a black ground. The main panels have scenes with the figures depicted in relief. The upper cover shows an enthroned prince with an old man approaching; the lower cover depicts a prince kneeling on a carpet in the shade of an apple tree in blossom with courtesan bringing food. The backgrounds of both panels show animal heads disguised among rocks. The interior covers have borders with elaborate gold floral work and quatrefoils with red and green highlights. The main panels are bowed with no decoration. The paintings are in the style of Safavid miniatures of the mid 16th century Shiraz school but appear to be 19th century imitations. They are probably illustrations to the story of Khawar and Shihar by Najib.

128. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding; lacquer painted over paper pastebords.
365 mm x 237 mm
Persia, probably Isfahan, 19th century
602 & 603a-1876 (I.D.)
The outer covers have a floral border surrounding a central gold painted panel. This has sculpted medallions with the Holy Mother and Child in the large central medallion and girls with string Qajar features in the decorative medallions above and below. The interior covers have gold painted floral work on a red ground.
Initially at least, Turkish bindings were influenced greatly by Persian styles of decoration, and this tended to remain the case up to the seventeenth century when they began to develop a style of their own. In the nineteenth century when Western influences began to appear in Ottoman life, book production was also affected and this can be seen in the types as well as format of bindings produced. However, although Turkish bookbindings followed the style of Persian bookcovers in that they often have a central medallion, corner-pieces and a decorated border, they frequently used particular motifs and combinations of colours which make them immediately identifiable as Turkish. They also showed more fondness than the Persians for combinations of coloured leathers. Turkish binding styles are an assimilation of much that went before and show little stylistic innovation. Often the decoration is prosaic and rarely rises to the poetic spirit of some Persian bindings but Turkish book covers do show a mastery in techniques, in particular in those produced from the second half of the sixteenth century and later, techniques which by then have begun to decline in neighbouring Persia. In the seventeenth century Persian bookbindings even begin to display the influence of some Turkish binding styles and it is sometimes difficult to assign with certainty a number of these loose covers to either country.  

The motifs used most frequently by Turkish binders are the ihtub or stylised Chinese cloud form which sometimes resembles a ribbon, the nimzî, which is derived from the acanthus form and which has connections with Byzantine decoration and thereby a precious connotation, the sızı, i.e. rushes, which is perhaps most typically Turkish but which came to be adopted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Persian binders and illuminators, and the Chinese lotus form. The ihtub and the sızı were used most frequently, the latter appearing very widely in ceramics, on velvets and silks and other media.

The binding designs can be divided into three main groups. There is the basic stamped design with medallion and corner-pieces with a wide range of decoration and techniques which is usually repeated in similar form on the doublure; a simple stamped design, often of floral work with usually only an unadorned border which helps to throw the main design into greater relief; an all-over pattern, usually of floral work which tends to appear from the early nineteenth century onwards under European influences.

Historically too, there is a reason for much less variety than is to be found in Persian bindings. The Ottoman dynasty established itself firmly at Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1455 and this remained the political and cultural centre of the widespread Ottoman Empire for over four hundred and fifty years up to its demise after the First World War. By contrast, Persia’s history witnessed a succession of dynasties either based at places such as Herat in the east or at Tabriz in the west and later at Isfahan in the south-west with consequent local styles and different cultural emphasis as well as alternative centres of production. The Ottoman Empire was very centralized and Istanbul is therefore likely to have been the source of most Ottoman book production. As far as the leather industry is concerned, we know from the great Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi (1611, died c.1668) that in Istanbul alone there were three thousand tanners and seven hundred workshops in the seventeenth century. The tanners were an unruly crowd, judging from what Çelebi writes. He says:
These tanners are a wild and savage lot of fellows and, it is they who were the cause of the late Melek Ahmet Pasha being deprived of the Grand Viziership. So riotous and unruly are they that, when banded together, they can quite capable of deceiving even the Emperor himself. In fact, a large number of them were assembled at the main entrance to the Imperial camp, barefoot and bareheaded, their hands and feet dyed red, arms and nails stained a deep blue or black, clad in leather and soffas and decorated with tassels, with aprons, turbans, surcoats and clubs all made of leather, crying aloud Aastar Aastar They carry fastened to the end of a long pole a banner made of leather. Other provincial centres such as Trabzon on the Black Sea coast had tanneries and according to Çelebi, Konya possessed the most skilful. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Çelebi's contemporary, noted that a town near Tokar was renowned for its fine morocco leathers. He says, Charklikue . . . is not above two leagues distant from it [Tokar]; for Charklikue is a great Town in a lovely Country, between two fertile Hills, where there grows excellent wine. It is for the most part inhabited by Christians, who are generally Tanners. The fine blew Goat-leather Skins being drest in Tocat, and the parts thereofout. It is thought the water contributes very much to their Art. For Tocat is as famous for the blew Goat-leather Skins, as Diarbikir and Bagdat are for the red, Mossoul or the ancient Nineveh for the yellow, and Ourfa for the black. Tavernier subsequently mentions Urfa as the place where great quantities of Cordovan skins are dressed and treated and on Diyarbakir he has this to say: About a League from the city there is a Channel cut out of the Tigris, that brings the water to the city. And in this water are all the red Maccouins wash'd that are made at Diyarbakir surpassing in colour all others in the East--which Manufacture employs a fourth part of the Inhabitants of the place. Smyrna (the present Izmir) is recorded as the principal centre for the export of Europe of skins and 'Cordovans of several colours.' In the sixteenth century, Richard Hakluyt (the former Adriaenpole) is described by Chesneau as being a centre for leathers of all colours but none of the above accounts actually refers to books or book production and decoration in any of the above provincial towns. In the absence of such information, we still have to assume, albeit with caution, that Istanbul was the most likely source of the decorated bindings in this collection. A French author, Joseph François Michaud writing in 1839 hints that there may be other centres of production but singles out the bindings made in Istanbul as 'surpassing all others by their neatness, elegance and perfection of workmanship.' He notes that Turkish bookcovers 'open and close easily and adds that the decoration of the covers and slip-cases is outstanding.' Here it is worth noting the mention of slip-cases. This is a Western form of binding and confirms the likely date of the example in the Museum's collection (see plate 163) which is discussed later on. In a subsequent volume within a discuss a discussion on the libraries of Istanbul, Michaud again refers to slip-cases which 'preserves (the books) from dust and from worms which make more damage in this country than anywhere else.' Michaud also confirms the care with which books were bound and maintained. He writes: Nulle part on n'a plus de soin des Livres, nulle part on ne met plus de prix à les conserver, à les faire paraître avec éclat, je douxe fort que dans le pays des Turcs aucun auteur jamais été aussi bien vêtu, aussi bien traite que ne l'est son ouvrage dans une bibliothèque ou dans la boutique d'un libraire. Most of the Turkish bindings in the Museum's collection are from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but the earliest example is a fine Imperial binding dating from the second half of the fifteenth century. This binding was formerly in the possession of Dr F R Martin and was probably executed for Sultan Mehmet Fatih, 'The Conqueror' (1451-1481), who did so much to reconstruct Istanbul after its capture in 1453 and to consolidate the Ottoman State. The exterior covers have large circular medallions with a work of outer borders and floral motifs within an inner border. The decoration of this cover may well have been inspired by bindings made in Herat around 1400. The design in any case represents a transitional style before the development of a particular and immediately identifiable Turkish style of decoration. Two other early examples of Turkish bindings are seen in plates 133 and 134, the former dating from the later half of the sixteenth century. The gold tooling of the central motifs of both exterior and interior covers is of an exquisite delicacy and the shape and extent of the corner pieces of the outer covers are a foretaste of the basic design that was to become standard among Ottoman binders. A variation of this is to be seen in plate 134 where gold radiating flecks are added to projections from the corner pieces and the motif is consequently more striking. The doublures of this binding have elaborate gold tooling similar to the previous example but it is the technique employed in the decoration of the central medallion and matching corner pieces which makes this doublure so remarkable. A complex filigree design of brown leather has been cut and placed over a blue paper ground and this and the previous cover are a testimony to the extraordinarily high standard of craftsmanship which was attained in the late sixteenth century. Both these bindings employ the standard format of design whereas on plate 135, one of the Museum's other early Turkish bindings uses a single medallion with a curved corner instead of the oblong medallion that is the norm. The extensions are repeated on the doublures which have elaborate gold paper filigree work over an ultramarine and green painted ground, and the decorated medallion on the outer cover shows clearly the tall rami motif and this is used again with great and effective simplicity in the binding on plate 141. In this case the medallion on the doublure is elongated and this together with the rather loose form of decoration on the outer cover suggests a strong affinity with Persian binding styles. A combination of the rami and tchi motifs can be seen on some of the stamped bindings. Those on plates 139 and 140 are identical in decoration and the outer covers of both these bindings as well as that an plate 144 are made up of a large central rectangular panel which is stamped with two impressions from the same die, the central joint clearly visible. Within the design, the scalloped medallion and decorative extensions on the vertical axis stand out quite plainly but the medallions themselves and the surrounding areas are filled with elaborate tchi and rami forms. The first two bindings also contain a lotus form in the medallions and decorative extensions. This type of design with elaborate gold paper filigree decoration on the doublures is typical of the bindings produced from the late seventeenth century and eighteenth century onwards. The medallions of the doublures are decorated in a wide range of colours and materials. The bindings on plates 139 and 140 have gold paper filigree over a blue, orange, turquoise and black paper ground. Plate 144 has gold paper filigree over a blue, red and turquoise paper ground and a green cotoneer background. The doublure of another eighteen century binding, (plate 145), has all the decoration, including the medallion and tchi motifs in elaborate gold leaf filigree over a blue silk ground. This binding contains scripts from the Qur'an, and while that of plates 139 and 140 have a lengthy inscription from the Hadith or Sayings of the Prophet. Whether or not these bindings enclosed an actual Qur'an or volumes of Hadith is not certain but undoubtedly they contained works of a religious nature. An eighteenth century binding with an untypical format and style of design is seen in plate 149. Here the exterior covers are divided into a main rectangular panel with two small panels above and below. The main panel is decorated all over with tchi forms stamped in relief within and between which are flowers picked out in blue paint. The more typical eighteenth century type of binding made by the Turks is that to be seen in plate 146, 147 and 148. All these exterior covers have a central medallion and corner-pieces but the latter have been extended so that in the case shown on plate 148 they actually join on all four sides. This is an innovation of the late eighteenth century which was developed in the early years of the following century. This is seen on the doublure in plate 147 and shows how the whole balance of design is affected with a rather heavy look. The colours become more sombre and a tulip red is particularly frequent. This is a typical example, see also plate 152. Yet although by this stage Turkish bindings show a certain stylisation, the techniques are still outstanding and bindings such as shown on plate 146 are examples of the wealth of craftsmanship as well as of design. Indeed, the decoration of the interior of the fore-edge flap is equal to much of the previous century's work. The interiors of two of the last two bindings mentioned are also of interest. In the case of plate 148, the casework border is in silver, the only one in the library's
collection, and probably put on the leather with a roller. The choice of silver was almost certainly for aesthetic and not economic reasons since a substantial amount of gold has been used on this cover and silver was obviously rightly considered to suit the crimson leather. Another binding with silver painting is in the possession of the Indian Department (plate 156). The binding on plate 147 has doublures of a much brighter red with medallions and corner-pieces filled with gold sprinkled paint. There is no further example of this type of decoration. When considering later Turkish bindings, it should be remembered that the Ottoman Empire underwent enormous cultural change during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The rising class of intellectuals was greatly influenced by Western ideas and during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1730-1754) and particularly during the grand vizaire of his son-in-law, Dâmât İbrahim Paşa, although his pavilions and gardens were built modelled on the park at Versailles. French influence was paramount and a kind of French rococo style developed particularly in architecture but also in book ornamentation and other decorative arts. Some of the more labouriously designed such as that on plate 146 are probably a result of this influence and the subsequent developments resulting from a taste for the style of Louis Philippe. Furthermore, the development of Ottoman literature should be noted at this stage. Although books had been printed in Istanbul in many of the languages of the subject peoples, such as Greek, Armenian and Hebrew, it was not until 1727 that the first Turkish printing press for Turkish and Islamic secular books was set up by a Hungarian, İbrahim Mêtesfêrî. The Grand Vizier İbrahim Paşa set up a committee which oversaw the translation of Arabic, Persian and Greek scientific texts into Turkish and Ahmad III and his successor Mahmûd I (1750-1754) founded a number of libraries in the Turkish capital. Although this period was brought to a sudden end by the overthrow of Ahmet III by the military caste, print-fabrication, Western influences continued and the number of foreign travellers and traders increased, as witnessed by the ever increasing volume of travel books on Turkey and its dominions published in France and England. The formation of a reasonably progressive Turkish middle-class intelligentsia was furthered in the subsequent period of Ottoman history, known as the Tanzimat. This period of reforms was begun by Sultan Mahmûd II (1808-1839) and followed up by his successors Abd al-Mü'îd (1839-1861) and Abd al-Âzîz (1861-1876). The Sultans and their reforming statesmen, Visconti St Albans, noted this abrupt and considerable encouragement by England and France. The first official Turkish newspaper, Taqvim-i Vâdidi, was published in 1851 and the growing amount of literature produced showed much French influence. At the same time as these cultural developments, it should be remembered that the Ottoman Empire was rapidly decaying politically and economically and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that later Ottoman book production reflects these radical changes that were taking place in Turkish society.

One of the Turkish bindings which most closely resembles European bindings is seen on plate 155. To begin with this volume of prayers is in a Western format adorned with gold embellishment with no isolated gold. The decoration, too, is quite unique for Ottoman bindings. The covers are of papier-mâché painted and varnished with an all-over pattern of acorns and intertwining branches. This work was produced in 1825 and the design foreshadows the taste for art nouveau which was to predominate later in Europe. A second book of prayers, also in a European format is dated 1851 (plate 156). Western influence can clearly be seen in the formalised leaf arrangement in the main border panels and the formal swirling decoration of the central medallion is a false copy from the decorative motifs used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Another Western form of binding is the slip-case and an example of this is seen on plate 153 which probably dates from the first half of the last century. The decoration of the main rectangular panel, too, betrays non-Islamic influence with leaf forms, similar to those in the border of plate 153, forming squares within which are punched gold rounds. There is left his native city in 1616 and travelled to Istanbul where he worked for Plovdiv (the ancient Philippopolis) and Belgrade. The marbled papers are of thirty-four varieties and are almost certainly of Islamic origin. In addition there are about eighty pages which have floral decorations which can be seen on both sides of the page. This is called native printing and Mu thin states that this process is a specialty of Tabriz (in north-west Persia) and near to Turkey. The maroon leather of this album amicorum is of a contemporary date but is not as interesting as the contents it protects. whole but the balance of the additional decorative motifs on the vertical axis above and below the central medallion is marred by horizontal additions which are quite out of keeping with the innate Islamic desire for harmony. The other book cover (plate 155) possesses a more truly traditional form of design but here the proportions have been distorted with the result that the central medallion which is heavily embossed creates an unusually overpowering effect. In the history of Western binding, some use was made of embossed book covers. These were particularly popular, for example in Jacobean and Elizabethan England. The only embroidered example in the Museum's collection of Islamic bindings is seen on plate 159. Furthermore, there appear to be at least two earlier Islamic bindings of early existence. The design is in the traditional format with medallion, corner-pieces and a border. Red, blue, green and yellow silks have been used to create a floral design in which red predominates. Silver thread has also been incorporated to outline the borders and decorative shapes. The sewing technique and knotwork can be seen from the photograph taken when the doublures were removed for cleaning. Some of the leather suggests that it is probably about fifty years old in which case the embroidered decoration which is probably about one hundred years old must have been remounted. Two bindings of brown leather with a similar type of decoration not yet discussed are shown on plates 150 and 158. The complicated swirling floral pattern with gold dot punching is tasteful and restrained by the fact that only gold has been used. The addition of another colour would have caused this design to become garish. The binding on plate 158 is similar in technique but the proportions of the design are more delicate. The covers were originally dyed blue, which can still be seen on the envelope flap. The doublures have marbled papers, a form of decoration for which Turkey was renowned. There are two Turkish bindings in the Museum's Indian Department which have a similar style of decoration. Both these covers were made for and presented to Lord Hardwicke, who was one of the First Commissioners for the Great Exhibition of 1851 which is a useful dating control. Marbled papers are known from sixteenth century Persian manuscripts and had been introduced to Europe by the end of that century. One of the Museum's Persian bindings (plate 99) has examples of marbling which resemble those in the binding which probably date from the early seventeenth century. From Persia marbled papers were almost certainly introduced into Turkey. Framing statements in his Sylates Sylvianum or A Natural History in Ten Centuries published in 1629. He was certain that it was a Turkish invention and he records:

The Turks have a pretty art of chamois-leather of paper which is not with us in use. They take divers oyled colours and put them severally in drops upon the water and stir the water lightly and then wet their paper (being of some thickness) with it and the paper will be waved and veined like chamolet or marble.44 The late F R Martin states that it is known that paper was sent from Europe to be decorated for the Turks and adorned with marbled figures and designs, the technique of which was then unknown in Europe.44 Another English traveller, George Sandys, writes in the first of his travel accounts:

The Turks curiously sleek their paper which is thicker much of it being colored and dappled like chamolet done by a trickle they have in dipping it in water. They have painters amongst them, expresse in their houres their letters which they are not to draw by their law, nor to have the figures of anything living yet how many early private begin to infringe that precept and the Grand Signor himself hath a law whereon the battles of Hungary are painted. Colors also are used...
A bookbinding; Turkish; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers gold tooled with large circular medallion with scalloped border, blue painted fillets and highlights; interior covers of plain green silk.

512 mm x 210 mm
Turkey, probably third quarter of 15th century
553-1985
This fine example of early Ottoman bookbinding was formerly in the collection of the late Dr F R Martin. It was probably executed for Sultan Muhammad II or Mehmet Flith ("The Conqueror") in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. The style is inspired by Herat bindings of the early fifteenth century, particularly in the floral motif of the flap and the flowers on the wide border of the circular medallion.
131. A bound manuscript; Turkish; Shamsul' Nāmah (a treatise on physiognomy) by Lusman b. Suyūdī Huṣaynī al-Adshuri; 71 ff. (2 blank), written in black naskh script; 11 lines to each page; diacritics in red, illuminated double title-page and 'muqarnas', gold ruled margins; illustrated portraits of the first thirteen Ottoman Sultans, all of which have been touched up and the faces redrawn at a later date; leather binding over pasteboard, gold block-stamped, no flap.

268 mm x 130 mm
Turkey, shawwal 987/november 1579
682 1875

132. A bound manuscript; Turkish; Hitb al-Rahār or Incantation of the Sea by Abu'T-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Sha'fī al-Zarwī al-Shāhlī (born in Morocco c. 1196, died 1258); 78 ff. (4 blank); written in Arabic in fine black naskh script; 9 lines to each page; by 'Umar; 9 illuminated headings on ff. 3v, 16v, 22v, 28v, 36r, 41v, 45r, 52v, 70v; binding of red leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers have gold stamp medallions; interior covers have gold ruled borders.

188 mm x 129 mm
Turkey, probably late 16th century 1904-1919

The work is a set of prayers for exorcism at certain times of day and is a particular favourite with travellers, especially those by sea, as it is in part a 'sustaining' or 'safeguard of the sea to them. The exterior covers have gold cablework borders and sculpted medallions with gold countersink leather with niptal sīr motif. The interior front cover contains a flower made up from the ninety-nine names of God. This is possibly an addition of the following century.

133. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards.

268 mm x 155 mm
Turkey, second half 16th century 155-1597

The exterior green leather covers have a deep block-stamped border with raised rosettes picked out in gold. The main panel has corner-pieces similarly block-stamped. The centre of the panel has an elaborate elongated quatrefoil motif delicately gold tooled. The fore-edge flap has three gold outlined panels with gold tooled metalwork at the centre of each. The interior maroon leather covers and fore-edge flap have a similar delicate design.
134. A bookbinding; red leather over paper pasteboards; gold block-stamping, gold painting and tooling and gold filigree work.

200 mm x 140 mm

Turkey, 16th/17th century

624-1895

The exterior covers and envelope flap are decorated with a deep gold block-stamped border with raised red scolloped medallions at intervals. The main panel has a central scolloped medallion and corner-pieces all deep gold block-stamped with floral decoration. The envelope flap has a scolloped roundel with elongated pomegranate on the horizontal axis at the corner of the flap. The interior covers have a border of gold fillets and gold tooled cahework. The corner-pieces have elaborate gold tooled stem patterns at the junction with the border. The corner-pieces and central scolloped medallion have elaborate brown leather filigree work over a blue paper ground. The interior and exterior of the fore-edge flap has a border of a gold fillet and seven interlocking ink moulds.
135. The upper and lower covers and the envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pastedboard; exterior covers of red leather with gold block-stamping and gold painting; interior covers of brown leather with gold paper filigree and gold painting.

294 mm x 107 mm
Turkey, 17th century
351, 351A & 953B.1885
The exterior covers have a border of gold painted fillets and gold block-stamped S-shapes. The main panel has a central scalloped medallion with gold block-stamped floral decoration and extension on the vertical axis which have red floral designs. The interior cover has a similar border and a central scalloped medallion which has elaborate gold paper filigree work over an ultramarine painted ground and an inner green painted ground. The additional motifs on the vertical axis have gold paper filigree work on a black painted ground.

136. A bound manuscript, Turkish; an album amicorum with autographs and coats of arms of German, Italian and Islamic origin; 228 ff. (18 blank); various entries ranging from 14 May 1616 to 1852; varieties of marbled and nature printed papers.

141 mm x 100 mm
Turkey, first half of 17th century
1392-1889
The red leather binding has a gold painted and gold calligraphy border. The central scalloped medallion and decorative additions on the vertical axis contain ale and boys motifs.

Plate 135
137. The cover of a bookbinding: red leather; gold painting and gold block-stamping.
237 mm x 142 mm
Turkey, probably 17th century
5277-1982
A border of gold cabling work and a gold painted line surrounds the main field in which is a central scalloped gold block-stamped medallion.

138. The cover of a bookbinding: black leather; gold painting and gold block-stamping.
234 mm x 142 mm
Turkey, probably 17th century
3322-1982
The overall design is similar to that of No. 137. The border consists of multiple gold painted fillets. The corner pieces and central scalloped medallion have gold block-stamped panels.
139. A bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior black leather covers gold block-stamped; interior brown leather covers with gold paper filigree work. 360 mm x 242 mm
Probably Turkey, 17th/18th century 160-1900
This binding is identical to No. 40. The exterior covers have a gold block-stamped border with a moral inscription from the Hadith or Collection of Traditions of the Prophet. It begins at the top pane.

The Prophet (upon whom be blessings and peace) said: He who reads a letter from the Book of God has done a good deed. And the good deed is worth ten of its kind. I do not say that Allah, Islam, and one letter, rather that Allah is a letter, Islam is a letter and both is a letter. This refers to the cryptic group of three letters found at the beginning of Surah 2, The On, the meaning of which has long been the subject of much discussion by various commentators on the Qur'an. (And he said, 'peace be upon him). Verify the Qur'an has something which is manifest and something which is hidden: as well as intricacies and the true sense. And what is manifest is for the common populace and what is hidden is for the learned ones; (this word salam) usually is taken to refer to the religious leaders in Iraq; and the intricacies are for those who were before and the true sense is for the prophets. And he said, 'peace be upon him). Verify the reason for this Qur'an's elegance is that it is from the hand of God and its elegance is [also] in your hands.

The main panel is gold block-stamped, the join from the two impressions of the stamp being clearly visible. The decoration is predominantly floral. The interior covers have a scalloped medallion and corner-pieces, all with gold paper filigree work over a multicoloured painted paper ground.

Plate 141

140. A bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior black leather covers gold block-stamped; interior brown leather covers with gold paper filigree work on a multicoloured ground. 360 mm x 242 mm
Probably Turkey, 17th/18th century 1947-1981
This binding is identical in size and design (including the inscription) to No. 139.

141. A cover of a bookbinding; red leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers with gold block-stamping; interior covers with leather filigree work. 308 mm x 200 mm
Probably Turkey, 17th/18th century 1946-1986
The exterior cover has a border of gold painted fillets and stamped 's' shapes. The main panel has a central gold block-stamped scalloped medallion with additional decorative motifs above and below on the vertical axis. There and the four corner pieces have a design of flowers and leaves of the sitr type. The interior cover has a gold stamped border. The main panel has an elongated scalloped medallion with additions on the vertical axis. These and the corner pieces are decorated with brown leather filigree work on a blue painted ground.

142. The upper and lower covers of a book binding; leather, gold tooling and block-stamping. 264 mm x 197 mm
Turkey, probably late 17th/early 18th century 5275 & 5276A 1782
One side has been trimmed. The design is simple with a plain tooling border, corner pieces and a central scalloped medallion.

Plate 144

143. The upper and lower covers and envelope flap of a book binding; red leather; blind tooling and stamping. 211 mm x 145 mm
Probably Turkey, 16th/17th century 954, 954A & 954B 1982
The border consists of two parallel double fillets. The main panel has a stamped scalloped medallion with stylised floral and leaf forms. This is repeated in the roof stamped at the point of the envelope flap. This cover is an example of the first stages in the decoration of Islamic book covers and merely shows the basic layout and design to be established later.
144. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboards; gold block-stamping and gold filigree work.
341 mm x 213 mm
Turkey, probably 19th century
123-1897.
The exterior black leather covers are similarly decorated. A gold painted and stamped fillet of cabledwork design surrounds a margin of gold block-stamped panels. These and the main inner panel are identically decorated with floral work. The inner panel is made up from two impressions of the stamp, the horizontal join being clearly visible. The interior red leather covers have a comparable outer margin round the main panel which has a central scalloped medallion and corner-pieces. These are all decorated with gold paper filigree work over a blue, red, and turquoise painted ground and green cotton ground.

145. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: leather over paper pasteboard; exterior covers of black leather with gold painting and gold block-stamping; interior covers of gold leather filigree over a blue silk ground.
281 mm x 152 mm
Turkey, 18th century
390, 390A, & 390B-1885
The exterior covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated. An all-over floral design is gold block-stamped with a scalloped central medallion and corner-pieces in a light green. Two impressions of the stamp have been used as the join can be seen horizontally. The fore-edge flap has alternating leaf shapes and flowers. The interior covers have elaborate gold filigree floral work with a central scalloped medallion on a light blue silk ground. This colour is probably meant to represent infinity and the binding is probably from a Qur'an or religious text since the interior of the fore-edge flap has an incomplete inscription inlaid in white with white and gold doublons. The text is from Sūrah 17, Bani Isrā'il, The Sons of Israel, v. 88 and reads:

God said (may He be exalted and magnified) say 'Even if Man and the Jinn were to combine together to bring a Qur'an like this one, they would not be able to do so, even if some of them (were to help the others).
146. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: red leather over paper pastesheets; gold block-stamping and gold painting.
267 mm x 162 mm
Turkey, probably 19th century
894 & 1904A 1897
The exterior covers and the envelope flap have a border of gold painted fillets and stamped 1-shapes forming a cablework design. These surround semi-gold block-stamped panels which have raised red roses and floral stems picked out in black. The main panel has a gold block-stamped scalloped medallion and corner-piece. The fore-edge flap has three elongated medallions with larger floral and leaf forms. The interior covers have a similar design but all the floral patterns have been picked out in black creating a holder effect. The interior of the fore-edge flap has three rectangular panels outlined with painted gold fillets and with a diamond-shaped patterns formed of intersecting loops at the centre of each.

147. A bookbinding: leather over paper pastesheets; exterior covers of brown leather with gold block-stamping and gold, red and black painting; interior covers of red-leather with gold painting.
308 mm x 205 mm
Turkey, late 19th century
665.1893
The exterior covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated. The border consists of panels of raised black sinuous stems on a gold ground which have been set between gold painted lozenge shapes. The main panel is typical Ottoman both in design and colour. A central medallion with projecting motifs on the vertical sides and corner pieces have raised flowers and leaves in orange red on a gold ground. The fore-edge flap has gold painted continuous swirling lines interspersed with gold dot punctured work. The interior covers have gold painted borders, a gold painted central medallion and corner pieces with gold highlighted paint.
148. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding; leather over paper pastebounds; exterior black leather covers gold block-stamped; interior red leather covers gold and silver stamped. 525 mm x 198 mm
Turkey, 18th/19th century
869 & 960in. 1900
The exterior black leather covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated with a gold block-stamped border of panels with raised stylized leaf-forms picked out in tomato red and in inner main panel with extensive corner pieces and a central scalloped medallion with raised flowers and stems in tomato red. The fore-edge flap has a central stamped motif and gold painted decoration down the centre. The interior red leather covers have a cabledwork border stamped in silver and a central elongated gold block-stamped motif with raised stylized leaf forms picked out in black. The fore-edge flap has a scalloped medallion in the point of the flap with similar design.
149. A bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers with gold block-stamping and blue paint; interior covers with black and gold leather filigree work.

231 mm x 129 mm

Turkey, late 19th century

423.1896

The exterior black leather covers and envelope flap are similarly decorated with a border of gold stamped S-shapes forming a cablework pattern.

The inner section contains one large gold block-stamped panel with flowers picked out in blue.

Narrow rectangular panels above and below are decorated in the same way. The interior brown leather covers have a similar border round the main panel which has a central elongated scalloped medallion and corner pieces. These have a blue paper ground with delicate black and gold filigree swirling stem patterns.
150. A cover of a bookbinding; brown leather over card (remounted); gold block-stamping
234 mm x 147 mm
Turkey, late 18th/early 19th century
2601.1081
The exterior brown leather cover has a narrow border consisting of a single gold fillet, continuous dots and leaf and stem forms. The large main rectangular design has a complex frame of linked floral motifs and a central medallion and corner pieces filled with elaborate floral design and gold dots (see also No. 158).

151. A cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior black leather cover with gold block-stamping; interior plain red leather cover.
171 mm x 108 mm
Turkey, late 18th/early 19th century
1995.1386
The exterior has a border of gold painted fillers and gold stamped S-shapes and a central elongated gold block-stamped medallion with additions above and below on the vertical axis. These all have red floral decoration.

152. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding; exterior covers of black leather over paper pasteboards; interior covers with plain paper paste-downs.
191 mm x 100 mm
Turkey, late 18th/early 19th century
The exterior covers and envelope flap have a border of gold stamped cabled work on red leather which has been turned over the main cover of black leather. This has a series of gold block-stamped panels with delicate floral work. The main inner panel has a central scalloped medallion with additional tapering motifs above and below on the vertical axis. These and the corner pieces have red floral patterns picked out in tomato red.
153. A bound manuscript; Turkish; a book of prayers beginning with lütuf al-dhikr Allah; 13 ff. (2 blank), written in fine black nasta'liq script, 15 lines to each page; gold-sprinkled paper; gold rosettes and elaborate gold decoration with tooling between sections.
182 mm x 106 mm
Turkey, Sh. 1150/March 1285
940, 1942
The binding is of European format with no flap; the covers of paper-maché painted and varnished. An all-over design of gold branches, leaves and acorns on a green ground, all within a narrow gold cablework border; a strong European influence. Opposite the flyleaf, a full-page painting in gold of a peony.

154. The upper cover of a bookbinding; leather over paper pasteboards; gold block-stamping and painting; leather filigree work.
255 mm x 139 mm
Turkey, probably early 19th century
1847-1876
The exterior brown leather cover has a border of gold fillets and continuous S-shapes. The main panel has a gold block-stamped scalloped medallion with radiating painted flecks and decorative motifs on the vertical axis. Corner-pieces are similarly decorated with floral work. The interior cover is of light brown leather and is of similar design. The medallion and corner-pieces have delicate leather filigree work over an ultramarine paper ground.

155. A bound manuscript; Turkish; a book of prayers; 25 ff. (2 blank), written in black naskh script by Muhammad al-Zahabi
Zafranbadi, 2 lines to each page; gold-edged borders, gold rosettes and gold and painted chapter headings.
255 mm x 140 mm
Turkey, Maštun Rashid Pasha [Istanbul], 1286/1868
The red leather binding, of European format, has elaborate gold scroll and gold and green painted borders and a central scalloped medallion similarly decorated with additions on the vertical axis.

156. A bookbinding; Turkish, leather over card boards; exterior covers silver painted with a central red painted medallion overlaid, doublures of marbled paper.
238 mm x 174 mm
Turkey, mid 19th century
E248 (I.D.)
This cover was presented to Her Majesty's Commissioners for the Great Exhibition of 1851.
157. A bookbinding; Turkish; leather over pasteboards; exterior covers gold block-stamped; doublures of marbled paper.
241 mm x 160 mm
Turkey, mid 19th century
E.248 (19)

The exterior covers are decorated in a similar manner to that of No. 150 and No. 156. This binding was presented to Her Majesty's Commissioners for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

158. A bookbinding; leather over pasteboards; exterior covers gold block-stamped; doublures of multi-coloured marbled paper.
230 mm x 146 mm
Turkey, mid 19th century
591 & 591A.1896

The exterior brown leather covers were probably originally the blue colour of the envelope flap which has suffered less exposure to light and handling than the other covers. These have a gold block-stamped design with a border of leaves and stems interspersed with dots and a narrower fillet with a stamped leaf pattern. The inner panel has a medallion and corner-pieces with elaborate scroll and floral work. The latter is comparable to that of No. 150. The envelope flap has a repeated pattern carelessly stamped at the corners. The foot-edge flap contains two gold painted panels with complex stamped motifs at the narrow ends. The doublures (on the upper and lower covers only) have predominantly red and blue marbled papers.
159. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding: leather over pasteboard; exterior covers decorated with multi-coloured embroidery; interior covers of blue paper doublures with cut out patterns. 328 mm x 220 mm
Turkey, probably 17th century
1945 & 1946:1981
This is a very unusual and extremely well preserved form of binding. No other comparable examples are known. Much of the background to the floral work and the borders is silver thread. It is probable that the embroidery has been removed at a later date since the leather (calf or hide) does not appear to be more than about fifty years old.

160. The upper and lower covers, the fore-edge flap and envelope flap of a bookbinding: brown leather over paper pastesboards; gold block-stamping and gold tooling. 239 mm x 147 mm
Turkey, probably 19th century
122:1897
The exterior covers have a deep work margin with a stamped red rose design on a gold ground. The margin has gold cablework on either side. The main panel has deep gold block-stamped corner-pieces and a scalloped medallion all of which have floral patterns picked out in tomato red. The fore-edge flap has three gold painted diamond shapes filled with intersecting lines. The interior covers have cream paper doublures with incised gilt floral work forming the corner-pieces and central medallions. The fore-edge flap is of leather with one diamond shaped area of intersecting gold lines.

Plate 159
Detail of embroidery from back
161. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding: leather; gold toothing and gold block-stamping.
446 mm x 240 mm
Turkey, 19th century
2576 & 2576A-1982
These covers are similar to those of No. 162. The border consists of gold cabochon. A central scalloped medallion with additional motif on the vertical axis is gold block-stamped.

162. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding: leather; gold toothing and gold block-stamping.
427 mm x 151 mm
Turkey, probably 19th century
955 & 955A-1982
The size of these Ottoman covers is unusual and suggests they were made for some official government document or record book. The border consists of single fillets and cabochon gold toothing. The central scalloped medallion has an outer gold tooled border with dot punches. The field is typical of 19th century Ottoman decorative work with swirling leaves, stems and flowers. The additional motifs on the vertical axis are similarly decorated. One of the dossiers has a scalloped plain paper backing sheet behind the medallion to strengthen the area which has been so heavily block-pressed.

165. A slip-case with folding flap; red leather over paper pastepads; gold toothing, gold painting and gold punching.
277 mm x 190 mm
Turkey, 19th century
126-1881
This slip-case is identical in decoration on both sides. It has a border of multiplex gold painted fillets and broader gold block-stamped fillets of inter-connecting S-shapes. The main panel has a rectangular bordered by gold block-stamped S-shapes with a gold painted design of cross-work in the form of leaves. The spaces formed by this cross-work pattern are filled with gold punched roundels which each have six dots. The main rectangular decorative panel has radiating decorations at the corners and at the middle of each-side. The top of the slip has similar decoration including gold painted leaves of the same type found on ceramics and textiles.
164. A bookbinding in European format; red leather over paper pasteboards; gold block-stamping and gold painting.  
278 mm x 200 mm  
Turkey, 15th century  
367-1885  
The exterior covers have a gold painted border which is worn in places and an elaborate sunken scalloped medallion with decorative additions on the vertical axis. This and the corner pieces are gold block-stamped with flowers and leaves picked out in red. The interior covers have a double border of narrow gold painted lines.

165. A bookbinding in European format; leather over paper pasteboards; exterior covers with gold painting and deep block-stamping.  
204 mm x 121 mm  
Turkey, 15th century  
369-1885  
The exterior black leather covers have gold painted borders with elaborate corner pieces. Each cover has a large central scalloped medallion with additions in the vertical axis. These are sunk into the leather covers and have an elaborate stamped floral design. This has been picked out in green, red and yellow. The spine has gold painted flowers and leaves. The interior pink leather covers have a double border each with two gold painted lines.
INDIAN BOOKBINDINGS

In style and technique, Indian bookbindings are very close to their Persian predecessors. This is shown by the three Indian manuscripts, particularly the Mughal Qur'an which dates from the early seventeenth century and has gold block-stamped covers. There are only a few Indian book-covers or bindings in the Victoria and Albert Museum Library. The Salting Bequest in 1939/40 provided four detached covers (plate 171), all leather over pasteboard from Ulwar, Rajputana. Although these are all decorated in a sixteenth or seventeenth century Persian style, they date from the sixteenth century. The joins from the block stamping are visible. Blue and gold colours predominate and three of them have painted filigree work. Ulwar, lying as it did on one of the important east-west trade routes, was the centre for a particular style of binding, which was practised by Kari Ahmad who came to Ulwar from Delhi about 1820 and whose work was continued by his two sons, Kari `Abd al-Rahman and `Abd al-Khaliq. Kari Ahmad had formerly been in the service of the Emperor at Delhi where his family had lived for one hundred and fifty years or so and he had probably been employed by the court. In most of the Ulwar designs the pattern was produced by the use of brass blocks and the colours were then painted on. This appears to be the technique used in the four covers in the Museum Library’s collection.

The other two Indian bindings in the Library are those on plates 167 and 170. Both these are nineteenth century Kashmir lacquer painted papier-mâché bindings. The former is lacquer painted on both sides with formal gold patterns on a red ground on the outside and a gold design of flowers and interlacing leaves on the outside. The outside of the latter has a floral design on a black and gold ground.

The Indian Department of the Museum has a further nine Islamic bindings, all but two of them (plates 94 and 100) dating from the nineteenth century. Five of these covers are lacquer painted but three of them (plates 100, 119 and 128) are almost certainly Persian book covers. In the last strong Qajar influence is noticeable in figures in the upper and lower medallions. The larger central medallion contains a picture of the Virgin and Child. Plate 119, which also has been painted in Qajar style, depicts two portraits of a lady and gentleman wearing European dress. A further binding (plate 100) covers an attractive Persian manuscript but the cover is not outstanding. Two of the bindings both numbered E/248 (plates 156 and 157) are Turkish bindings, but neither of them is of importance artistically—one is very close to plates 150 and 158. The most interesting cover is a lacquer painted Kashmir example (plate 173) and a small block-pressed cover both of which contain examples of ornamental calligraphy. The remaining cover which dates from the nineteenth century is a testament to the decline of a once imaginative and highly skilled and decorative art (plate 174).
166. A bound manuscript, Mughal or Deccani: the Qur'an: 471 ff. (4 blank); written in Arabic in black thuluth, 31 lines to each page, marginal ornaments in gold; elaborately illuminated double title-page; decorated chapter headings and rosettes, two full-page flower paintings (of a peony and a rose) on a gold ground at rear; the edges of the text block are gold painted; inscribed on ff. 3r and 469v with identical royal wasf inscriptions, both badly rubbed, but apparently recording its donation to a religious institution in 1061/1657; the binding of leather over pasteboard is gold block-stamped; the inscription on the fore-edge flap in red thuluth is from Surah 56, al-Iqra' or The Injunction, vv. 79, 80: None shall touch it save the purified ones. A revelation from the Lord of the worlds.

India, Mughal or Deccani, early 17th century
23x3.180

167. The upper and lower covers of a bookbinding, papier-mâché with lacquer painting.
203 mm x 160 mm
India, Kashmir, probably 17th/18th century
921 & 921A.1809
The exterior covers have a series of elaborate borders of mostly floral work in various colours on a gold ground. The main panel has similar decoration with swirling tendril work round a central diamond-shaped motif and ten triangular areas each at the top and the bottom which are to be seen as a continuation of traditional designs with cornerpieces. The interior covers have multiple borders and an inner panel with a diagonal pattern of gold leaf forms on a red ground.
A bound manuscript, Indian (Kashmir); the Qur'an, 950 ff. (12 blank); written in black naskhi with black vocalisation within gold ruled margins; 8 lines per page; border with taifir in red and black naskhi and outer border with taifir in Persian in nasta'liq; double-page illuminations with tracery and floral work on ff. 7v, 8r, 38v, 39v, 91v, 92r, 93r; half-page illumination on f. 8v.

582 mm x 252 mm
India, Kathiawar, early 19th century
1839-1842
The covers are lacquer-painted paper-mâché boards. The exterior have an elaborate all-over floral pattern predominance of pink and yellow within a border of blue floral patterns on a black ground. The spine which has raised bands in the European style has yellow printed flowers. The interior covers are plain black.
169. A bound manuscript: Indian (Kashmir): the romantic story of Khosrow and Shirin of Shaykh Nizamun Ganjwai; 295 ff. (13 blank), written in fine black nastaʿlīq script, in two columns, 11 lines to each column; 2 ff. with verses in later shikastah script; double-page suwarah, illuminated border and headings, marginal ornaments and gold ruled margins. 27 almost full-page miniature paintings on ff. 32v, 43v, 47v, 61r, 64r, 80v, 92v, 96r, 101r, 113r, 126r, 139r, 144r, 154r, 166r, 176r, 180r, 186r, 209v, 214r, 228v, 233r, 235r, 252r, 255r, 266r, 277r; the exterior and interior covers are lacquer painted with central rectangular panels of flowers (including narcissi, irises, roses, tulips) within florally decorated borders. 250 mm x 140 mm
India, Kashmir, early 19th century 2933-1911

170. A cover of a bookbinding: papier-mâché with lacquer painting. 258 mm x 168 mm
India, Kashmir, probably 19th century 703-1876
The exterior cover has a series of borders of which the main one consists of multi-coloured floral work on a gold ground. The main panel has a central roundel with naturalistic flowers, including roses on a deep red ground. The ground of the main panel is gilded with floral decoration and on this are scalloped bands which all point forwards to the roundel. These all have white outlines and floral work painted on a black ground.
171. Four detached covers of bookbindings; leather over pasteboards; gold block-stamping and gold painting.
503 mm x 384 mm (two)
296 mm x 179 mm (two)
India, Mughal, 16th century
Saleing Request—1999/9910

These four covers are all decorated in an elaborate style based on 16th and 17th century Persian decorative bindings. They are all gold block-stamped and gold painted. Three have blue grounds and one has a double blue painted border. The joins of the stamped impressions are clearly visible on the two larger covers.

172. A small bound manuscript containing 9 folios of calligraphy done with the finger nail (Khuthu al-Nakhsh) [see No. 173]. Each sheet consists of a central panel with an outer edge of cut and embossed paper with scalloped edges. These have been mounted over pink paper. The work appears to be a panegyric to the King of Ouda. The covers are of gold block-pressed leather close to those produced in Raiputan (Saleing Bequest). The doublures are of blue marbled papers.
140 mm x 92 mm
India, Ouda, 12/51848-9 (10)

This work was exhibited in London at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and is listed in the Official Catalogue, II, IV, Fine Arts, Colomns, p. 927. The entry states that the calligrapher to the King of Ouda executed this work with the nails of the thirteenth and second finger of the right hand.
172. A bound manuscript, Indian
(Kashmir); an album of embossed
calligraphy; 9 ff.; various examples of
nastā'ilī script, most in gold, within gold painted ornamental borders.
295 mm x 220 mm
Kashmir, 1265/1846-7
4625 (1D)
This volume contains examples of ornamental nastā'ilī script as well as pictures of a rose and a
stag which have been done by a process called a Nābkūm, i.e. produced by use of the finger
nail. These have been mounted on card folios. The
covers of the album are of paper-mâché with
lacquer painted decoration. The exterior covers
show birds among various assorted flowers. The
interior covers depict pink roses on a black ground
with yellow painted borders. This album was
shown at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867 and
is recorded as having been owned by Mirza Imam
Wardi (sic) of Lahore. The name Imam Wardi
appears on the dated folio.
457 mm x 285 mm
Kashmir, late 19th century
Bartle Freere, (10)
The covers have crudely designed and enamelled floral decorations in the manner of book-Persian bindings. The corner pieces have been enlarged so as to form a complete section at top and bottom of the upper panel. The original spine has floral design comparable with those shown in No. 168.
BOOKBINDING TOOLS

Fig. 23 19th century Persian panel of leather, decorated by use of stamps (e.g. fig. 27) and punches (e.g. fig. 22).

Fig. 24 19th century Persian panel of leather, embossed by stamps (see fig. 20), coloured and giltted by hand. Two lines of inscriptions in green ink.

Fig. 25 19th century Persian panel of leather, embossed by stamps (e.g. fig. 55), coloured and giltted by hand.

Fig. 26 19th century Persian leather panel decorated by use of stamps (e.g. fig. 80).
Fig. 27: Persian stamp of engraved brass, 18th century (1).

Fig. 28: Persian stamp of engraved brass, Persia, early 17th century (2).

Fig. 29: Persian stamp of engraved brass, 17th-18th century.
Fig. 30. Eights stamps of engraved steel, made at Shiraz, Persia, mid 19th century.

Fig. 31. Persian stamp of incised leather, Early 17th century.

Fig. 32. Persian stamp of incised leather, 17th century.

Fig. 33. Stamp of engraved brass, Persia, 17th century.
Fig. 34: Stencil for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 35: Sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 36: Stencil and sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 37: Stencil for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 38: Sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 39: Sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 40: Stencil and sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 41: Stencil for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.
Fig. 43 Stencil and sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 44 Stencil and sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.

Fig. 45 Stencil and sketch for decorating Turkish manuscripts and bindings, mostly 19th century.