99 Binding

Rear cover and flap of a Qur’ān Section (Juz') 9, 36.5 x 24 cm.
Iran, 10th/11th cent.

Gilt leather, somewhat repaired on the flap. A central rectangle with narrow black border contains an oval medallion with pendants. These repeat in the four corners. Both medallions and ground are covered with arabesques, blossoms and cloud-scrolls. There is an outer border with four hadīths (Sayings of The Prophet) written in Thulū. These all urge Muslims to read the Holy Book. Hadīths used on a Qur’ān cover, or on the opening pages of the manuscript are relatively rare. Normally certain Qur’ānic verses were traditionally written there. The decoration and inscriptions on the flap are merely a repeat of the cover. There is another section with an identical binding in the Aga Khan Collection, see Aga Khan Catalogue, Vol 4 1977, Ms. 10. See also Wiet, Mémoires, P1.LXIX.

CBL Ms 1535 (Arberry No. 167)

100 Binding

Front cover of a Qur’ān, 11.7 x 7.4 cm.
Iran, 12th/13th cent.

Lacquered boards with red leather spine. A central medallion of leaves and blossoms is surrounded by feather-like multiple leaves and blossoms, gold on black. The same motifs are repeated in a narrow outer border with gold and black bands on each side.

CBL Ms. 1571 (Arberry No. 178)
101 Binding

Front cover of a Qurʾān, 18.5 × 12.5 cm.
Iran, 1199/1784 - 85.

Dark brown leather covered in gilt. A central rectangular panel containing a lobed and pointed cartouche standing on its end. Within this is a scene showing flowers and a flowering shrub growing from under a mound of stones. This is surrounded three separate borders with striped edging. Two of these are floral, the other bears the traditional verse from LV1 Al-Waqūq, 79, repeated six times. Above these verses is the date 1199/1784 - 85. It is unusual for Qurʾān bindings to contain representational scenes, however stylised. The binding is on a manuscript dated 943/1537.

CHL Ms. 1531 (Arberry No. 138)

102 Binding

Front cover of a Qurʾān, 33 × 21.5 cm.
Iran, 12/82/1865 - 66.

Lacquer over papier-maché base, attached by a red leather spine. In the centre is a large multi-branched oval motif decorated with flower chains. The origins of such a motif go back to 16th century Safavid times. This lies on a honey-coloured ground of arabesque scrolls. In the middle of the oval is a black quatrefoil with gold floral decoration, which also repeats in a surrounding border. On either side are red bands with gold floral decoration. There is a final outer border of gold flowers on black. The doublures are of traditional red, with a fine gold floral medallion and surrounding borders. The whole is an excellent example of Qajar bookbinding. The manuscript, a copy of the Qurʾān, is Safavid, 16th century, undated. In 1271/1854 - 5 it became the property of Hūshan Mirzā, a grandson of Fath-ʿAli Shah (1797 - 1834) who added hadiths throughout in 1272/1855 - 6. In 1282/1865 it was rebound by a new owner Mirzā-ʿAli-Naqi - Galen of Incoherence and Aristotle of Knowledge - for whom this binding was made.

Published: Van Regemorter, Oriental Bindings, Dublin, 1961, p. 52

CHL Ms. 1537 (Arberry No. 139)
103 Binding

Front cover of a Qur’an, 14.8 × 9.5 cm.
Artist: Farhāllāh Shirāzī (of Shiraz).
Iran: 132/0/1902-3.
Laquered boards with red leather spine. Most of the cover is taken up with a floral composition in an oval. Beyond are four floral corner pieces. This central area is surrounded by two formal borders with a narrow leaf design. The binding bears an inscription on the front stating it to have been made to the order of Farazjallāh Khān. For an earlier floral composition on a Qur’an binding see No. 101. An example of the work of this artist appears in Sotheby Catalogue, 9.12.75., Lot 442. For another, see Bahrami, Iranian Art, No. 105, dated Shiraz, 1290/1873 - 4.
CBL Ms 1555 (Arberry 175)

104 Binding

Rear cover and flap of a Qur’an Section (Juz”) 10, 36.5 × 26.6 cm.
Egypt 8th/14th - 9th/15th cent.
Leather over green silk. A fine example of cut leather filigree work. The central medallion with pointed finials is made up of eight palmettes around a flower head, all cut out of a larger sheet of leather. This lies on a ground of blind tooled interlace within a rectangle. In the corners of the rectangle are quarter-circles with finials and filigree centres. There are two outer borders: an inner one of blind tooled rope-work and an outer one of blind tooled knots around squares with five gold points. The flap is even more elaborate, consisting almost entirely of arabesque scroll work around a central palmette. The surrounding borders are identical to those on the cover. The Cincinnati Art Museum contains another section identical to this, though whether the binding is also identical is not clear. See, Oriental Art, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 P. 97: pls. VII, VIII; Hussein, Origins of the Book, Leipzig 1971, No. 104. Also Wiet Album, pl. 100.
CBL Ms. 1474 (Arberry No. 77)
105 Binding

Rear cover and flap of a Qurʾān Section (Juz’ ) 28, 37 × 27 cm.
Egypt or Syria, late 8th/14th cent.

Light brown leather. A central circle contains an eight-pointed star which is repeated in miniature in its own centre. Lines extend from this latter star to the outer circle, passing through an octagon on the way. This decoration is partially in blind tooling and partially in gold. All the interlaces are filled with gold points and stamps. There is an outer border to twelve semi-circles containing blind tooled interlace with a central gold point. Above and below are finials which culminate in a leaf pattern. The central medallion is in a plain rectangle with a quarter-circle in each corner bearing ogival petals and decorated with blind tooled interlace and gold points. There are two outer borders of interlace; the final one in blind tooling alone, the inner one containing additional gold points. The flap contains a circle bearing a gold tooled star-polygon filled with blind tooled interlace and gold points. This lies on a ground richly decorated with blind tooled interlace and gold dots. The outer borders are identical to those on the cover. This manuscript was made for the Amir Ayrimish al-Bajist (d. 804/1400) and endowed by him to his madrasa in Tripoli. There is another section in the Chester Beatty collection; one in the Freer Gallery, Washington, see Atti, Art of the Arab World, 1975, No. 40; one in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, see Ettinghausen, Near Eastern Bookcovers, 1959, p. 125; and another in the British Library, see Lings and Safadi, No. 160. A further section belongs to the Library of Congress, Washington.

CBI. Ms. 1499 (Arberry No. 110)

106 Binding

Doublure of a Qurʾān binding.
Egypt, mid. 9th/15th cent.

Light brown leather over pink and cream silk. The central medallion is a fine example of Mamlūk filigree work. Palmettes are arranged around a small knot in the shape of a star. From the palmettes grow clusters of arabesque scrolls, the interiors of which have been coloured in blue to make a secondary pattern of six interlinked circles. Around the central medallion are semi-circles covered in scales which have been blind tooled. There are elaborate finials above and below which swell out into regular shapes before tapering to a point. These shapes are filled with cut leather decoration on a cream of pink silk ground. In the four corners of the main panel are quarter-circles with leather filigree decoration on pink, partially painted in blue.

Exhibited: New York 1933 - 7
Published: Van Regenmorter, Oriental Bindings, Dublin 1961, pl. 22.

CBI. Additional
107 Binding

Front cover of No. 70, 29.2 × 19.2 cm.
Turkey, 859/1455.

Brown leather with modern restoration around the edges. Two central oval medallions, one inside the other and linked the knots. Both are filled with fine arabesque decoration. The medallions are in a plain rectangle with decorated triangular cornerpieces. There is an outer border of interface, now partially covered by the restoration. All decoration is gilt, both the engraved areas within the rectangle and the border which is stamped. This decoration is gilt, both the engraved areas within rectangle and the border which is stamped. This decoration is identical to that used in contemporary Mamluk work. Egyptian and Syrian craftsmen and artists worked for the Ottomans from this century onwards. See no. 41.

CBL Mss. 1504 (Arberry No. 188)

108 Binding

Front cover and flap of a Qur’an Section (Tafsir) 8, 35.8 × 24.8 cm.
Turkey, 11th/17th cent.

Dark red leather partially gilt. In the centre is an oval medallion with pendants above and below. This lies in a plain rectangle with triangular corner pieces. All these areas are decorated with finely sculpted carnations and long saw-edged leaves, typical of Ottoman work, and applied by means of special stamps which sink the designs into the leather. Afterwards the sunken areas are painted in gilt. Around the outer edge of the binding is a rope-work band of gold stamps. The interior of the flap is decorated with paper filigree on gold. The manuscript is somewhat earlier than the binding.

CBL Ms. 1452 (Arberry No. 186)
109 Binding

Front cover of a Qur'an, 19 × 11.5 cm.
Turkey, 12th/13th cent.

Dark brown leather, partially gilt and painted. A narrow central panel contains an oval medallion with pendants, and triangular corner pieces. All are sunk and partially gilt. They are decorated with floral arabesques and cloud scrolls, plus palmettes in the pendants. All details are painted in dark brown. There is a wide outer border flanked by bands of stamped rope-work. Between are panels of scrolls bearing carnations and saw-edged leaves. These are also partially gilt and painted. The panels are separated by raised oval medallions, each bearing five gold stamps in the shape of flower heads.

CBL Ms (Arberryn No. 244)

110 Binding

Front cover and flap of a Qur'an, 17.8 × 12 cm.
Turkey, 1218/1803 - 4.

Gilt binding with painted decoration. A particularly fine example of its type. There is a central rectangular panel covered with eight circular arabesques bearing carnations and saw-edged leaves. The four central ones pass through knotted cloud scrolls and the two at each end through open ones. All decoration is painted in red. There is a wide outer border flanked by gold rope-work bands made of stamped 'S' shapes. The border comprises panels of interlocking arabesques and cloud scrolls. The panels are separated by raised oval medallions with six-petalled flowers in gold on red. The interior of the flap has a central half-medallion and triangular corner pieces in olive green with finely engraved arabesque scrolls interspersed with silver dots. The edge of the flap bears a narrow panel with multiple cartouches containing six-petalled flowers. The panel is flanked by arabesque scroll-work.

Published: Van Regemorter, Oriental Bindings, Dublin 1961, pl. 48.

CBL Ms. 1580 (Arberryn No. 216)