PENBOX OF SULTAN BAHRITE SHABAN
Whole and Details (14th century)
VESSEL INLAID WITH BRONZE
Decorated with martichores
Plate CLXXIII
Plates CLXXIV to CLXXX
MANUSCRIPTS
Bindings and Applications of Paper Cutouts

Book binding (Pl. CLXXXIV).—Almost all Oriental bindings are lapjointed and of great beauty; we have only represented one or two since they all have ornaments printed on different grounds. We did not believe it necessary to add the cover, as this would only have complicated the design while adding nothing to the understanding of the plate.

Applications of paper cutouts (Pl. CLXXVI and CLXXVII).—These coloured papers, generally cut out with a penknife a half-dozen at a time, are glued upon different-coloured ground paper, and sometimes on silver or gold paper; they simulate in this inexpensive way painted panelling, and are suited to dwellings of people of little fortune. Those represented here were done by a Turkish artist, as seen in the rather heavy style of this decadent period.

Illustrations from Maqamas of al-Hariri (Pl. CLXXVII to CLXXX).—The manuscript from which were taken these interesting reproductions is a small folio rich in numerous and remarkable miniatures done by Yahia al-Wassetti, in the year 634 (1236 of the Christian era).

In Pl. CLXXXVII, both natural and fantastic animals are found within the splendid foliated frame of the frontispiece.

These drawings seem to have been traced in haste, although a few are of more superior composition. Some parts are, in effect, boldly drawn, while others are timidly attempted. Heads and hands are poorly done and always reflect Persian sentiment and style. The folds of cloth are draped symmetrically and drawn like moiré. The animals are well treated and the plants, drawn in a fantastic fashion, are always charmingly ornamented.

Several heads are haloed, with no other purpose, in our view, than to better stand out from the surrounding confusion.

Clothing may provide precious information on the ornamentation of textiles during this period. It is apparent that manufacturers were already imitating these Kufic characters, and that there has been a stubborn refusal to recognise this in Oriental textiles. We believe that certain textiles considered until now to have been the work of Christian workmen or counterfeiters could well be authentic.

We have said that the frame, adorned with a succession of various animals, was taken from a copy belonging to a certain Yahia al-Wassetti, which is to say a native of Wassett, a small city in Mesopotamia. The small winged and haloed figures appear to be imitations of Byzantine paintings, or of certain other paintings of prior execution which we have sometimes found in Egyptian temples converted into churches.

The illustration of Plate CLXXXIX, entitled Mandaneh, shows a rather curious specimen of these small chalets, found in a wide variety of places, particularly in gardens and race courses.
Plate CLXXIV

BOOKBINDING, L'APPOINTÉE

Board, endpaper (16th century)
APPLICATIONS OF PAPER CUTOUTS
(End of 18th century)

Plate CLXXVI