A LOAN EXHIBITION OF
ISLAMIC BOOKBINDINGS

THE ORIENTAL DEPARTMENT
THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
MARCH 20 TO MAY 20, 1932
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In this loan exhibit the Art Institute has tried to bring together a limited selection of the best examples of Islamic bookbinding to be found in the United States, and to make this material available to students in a short catalogue. The Institute is deeply grateful for the generous co-operation of the museums and collectors who have made this exhibition possible. Special thanks are due Dr. Martin Sprengling of the University of Chicago for his invaluable assistance in the reading of the inscriptions.

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Mr. Kirkor Minassian
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INTRODUCTION

Of the many arts and crafts of Islam, that of leatherwork is perhaps the least known today. This is undoubtedly due to the absence of material for study, as leather, for obvious reasons, has not survived to as great an extent as pottery and metal work, for even wood carvings on doors have had a more stationary existence than saddles and boots.

In spite of the fact that leather was used, and to a great extent, and that it must have been elaborately embellished for state occasions, no example from the early Muslim period is known to have survived until the present time. One therefore finds oneself with bookbindings as the only source of information on this subject. The influence of Islamic leatherwork may, however, be traced in our American western saddle, which must have been introduced with the horse by the early Spanish conquerors. Here, as everywhere, the "horror vacui" which has so often been quoted as a characteristic feature of Muslim decoration is in evidence.

The Muslim book resembles our Western volume in nearly every particular of its makeup. The leaves are gathered in quires and sewn together along the back; the top and bottom inner edge is next embellished with a headband of colorful silk, the side covers attached, and finally both boards and back are covered with leather, usually goat skin, while endpapers of such various materials as leather, silk and marbleized or cut out paper are pasted in.

The main difference between the Islamic book and a modern one is the flap, a five-sided pointed extension of the left cover of the book (the back cover to the Muslim reader). (Nos. 5, 9, 10 and others.) Its conservative dimensions were always dictated by the size of the book, one third of the width of the board at top and bottom, and it was cut-off to a point which coincided with the exact center of the binding. It has been a matter of dispute among previous writers whether this flap was intended to lie inside or outside the front or right-hand board, but, even though the hinges which hold it may in some cases be long enough to allow for its position outside, it seems more probable that it was folded inside, as most flaps are found to be in far better condition than their bindings.
A word or two concerning the format of the Islamic books may be in order. The early book was usually wider in proportion to its height than that of the XVI, XVII and XVIII centuries, being approximately 3:4 (Nos. 1 and 14), as compared with 3:5 (No. 16), but there were many exceptions. The sizes varied from the most minute copies of the Koran to those very large ones bound in many volumes for use in the Mosques (Nos. 2, 3, 4, 13). These latter may be found throughout the entire Muslim era and realm. There are a great many volumes of the finest type approximately six by ten inches in size.

Various methods of decoration were used on the leather of these bindings, the oldest, so far as we know, being cut openwork with white or gilt parchment or silk inserted behind (Nos. 5 and 6). Later, colored paper and thin leathers were also used as backgrounds, and the process was refined and elaborated. Instead of heavy leather, cut in rather bold designs, such as was found by A. v. Le Coq (Chotscho Berlin, 1913, p. 8) in Central Asia, or was formerly used in Egypt for Coptic book and leatherwork, finer leathers, cut very thin were used, and even paper was frequently employed. In this manner the designs could be made very elaborate (Nos. 31 and others). These intricately cut decorations, which became increasingly delicate and colorful, were, in the later centuries, reserved for the inside of the covers where they would receive more protection. The technique of cutting these panels has been discussed exhaustively by Dr. Jean Loubier in Archiv für Buchbinderei (Jan. 1911, Vol. 10:145 ff), where he demonstrates conclusively that all the best pieces were cut free-hand and in one piece, and that stamps were employed at a late date (No. 33). In exceptional cases, the cut designs were tooled in relief (Nos. 15, 29 and 30).

Blind tooling with or without gilding or silvering was also one of the earliest methods of decorating the book covers. At first few tools were used, and great ingenuity was practiced in their application. The Egyptian binders were especially partial to this technique, as it gave wide scope to the designer without necessitating the acquisition of many tools by the workman (No. 4). In Persia, this practice soon developed into the showy art of leather embossing which permitted greater finesse and freedom to the designer but less to the workman. Leather and probably metal dies were cut for separate units, at first only for the central medallions and corners (No. 32), soon also for sections of the border, and finally for complete plates to cover the whole binding (Nos. 21 and 46). If symmetrically designed, a half plate could be turned and used twice on the same
cover, though the joining was always visible (Nos. 19 and 28). In some cases, these panels remained the color of the leather (No. 18), but more often gilding, frequently in several shades, was employed (frontispiece).

To Es-Sofiani*, a bookbinder of the XVII century, we are indebted for a comprehensive account of Islamic bookbinding. His querulous disposition and large fees for apprenticeship, soon combined to send those aspiring to learn the trade to his former pupils, whose charges were smaller and whose tongues were less sharp. Es-Sofiani resented this cut-rate competition exceedingly, so much so that he produced a book, setting forth all the tricks of his trade and with an introduction lamenting bitterly the world's unfair treatment of him. His description which is at times very difficult to follow, goes into great detail. An interesting bit of exposition concerns embossed decoration with dies, in which he explains how the pasteboard was carefully hollowed out, till the die fitted smoothly, then paste was run under the leather and the die was pressed down, a method which allowed for very sharp impressions. A similar explanation of this method was given by an old Constantinople binder to M. Sakisian (Revue de L'Art, 51:278, May 1927). Some bindings were painted in the same fashion as the miniatures, and are often to be found in connection with embossing. Occasionally colors are employed (No. 16) but the use of gold alone is perhaps more common (No. 17).

From this type of decoration the varnished or lacquered bookbindings developed. The earliest of these were on a heavily chalked leather or parchment ground (Nos. 34 and 36). Brilliance was one of the aims of this school, and to that end, gilding or even powdered mother-of-pearl was used under the clear lacquer (Nos. 35 and 36). Later, heavy pastebboard covers alone were used as the foundation for the lacquer work. A revival of this art in the XIX century reached no mean degree of perfection, and artisans such as Mirza Baba produced really charming objects, worthy of their predecessors (No. 41).

The covers may be divided in two sharply differentiated groups according to designs: the geometric and the floral conventional. Interlacing strapwork in often highly complicated patterns forms the skeletons of many while the ground is covered with stars and knots (Nos. 7, 8, 11-14). Sometimes the intersecting of two circles forms an oval panel in the center, filled with interlaced ribbons. Nearly always the center of the cover is emphasized in some way, while the border is of less importance. Another

*Es-Sofiani: Art de la Reliure et de la Dorure. Published by P. Ricard, Paris, 1925.
popular design is a small star motif in the center and a more elaborate border (Nos. 5 and 12). These bindings are generally of early date and have been for the most part recovered from Egypt. The horror vacui may be felt in many of them (No. 4) but even the scale of the design in the large Korans is as a rule well handled (Nos. 2, 3 and 13) and the space division is admirable.

Dr. Gratzl attributes to South Arabia (Islamische Bucheinbände, p. 15 ff, Leipzig 1924) certain bindings which have borders formed by the repetition of a short inscription decorated entirely in blind tooling two examples in the exhibit, both with Kufic fleury in the border fit his descriptions (No. 10). These bindings, as nearly all of the early geometrically designed pieces came originally from the famous collection of Dr. B. Moritz of Cairo and Berlin, and have now been acquired by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

The early Persian bindings were supposedly of similar geometric designs as the Egyptian, and one may find archaizing examples (No. 33) using an adaptation of the same type of quite recent date.

The floral conventional designs are most characteristic of Persia and from there were adopted by Turkey. Their similarity to rug patterns is so evident that it has been expedient to use the same words in describing them. Most used of all general lay-outs is the use of a central lobed medallion with two auxiliary cartouches at the top and bottom. Ordinarily the inside of the covers have a similar treatment, and the framing border consists of alternating oblong and round panels. Often the leafage in these panels or their backgrounds is the well-known arabesque and palmette vine (No. 20) but at other times it runs the full gamut of the animal and hunting carpets, clearly showing that they were designed by the best of the miniature painters (Nos. 16 to 19, 21, and 22).

The Turkish bookbinders follow this general type of design but they show a fondness for a combination of colored leathers unknown in Persia (No. 49). The designs may be less inventive but in the best examples the execution is perfect. The linings are often of marbleized paper for which they were justly famous (No. 43). Differing from the Persians they also employed flexible bindings (Nos. 48 and 49), though they usually retained the flap. Lacquer work was also done in Turkey, where Adrianople was well-known as one of the centers of production (No. 45).

Finally some mention must be made of the use of inscriptions on the bindings. Small circular stamps with the name of the maker or such say-
ings as “God is my sufficiency” (No. 10) are found on some of the early bindings of the Egyptian type, as well as the rectangular stamps with Kufic inscription mentioned above.

It became customary to place an inscription on the joint connecting the cover with the flap of a Koran stating that only the pure must touch this holy book (Nos. 9, 28 and 32), in other instances the same flap was utilized for quotations of poetry eulogizing the author of the book (Nos. 21 and 31). At times the whole embossed border of the book cover was used for quotations from the Koran (No. 27). The Bokhara portfolios of quite recent date show inscriptions covering the entire field (Nos. 42a and b).

The dating of Islamic bookbindings is still a debatable problem, and in this catalogue only century approximations have been attempted, for the most part on previously published material. Much study is still needed on this point and particularly a thorough comparison with the other decorative arts as well as with architectural ornaments.

Today fine bookbinding in Egypt is reported on the verge of extinction, if not already dead, but in Morocco a conscious effort is made by the French government to revive it along with the other native crafts. In Persia it is reported that fine work is still done, particularly in Isfahan, where the modern master Abbas Khan produces bindings worthy of comparison with some of the best XVII century work.

Julie Michelet
CATALOGUE

EGYPTIAN

No. 1 A Pair of Covers with Rectangular Flap, Blind Tooled
This dark leather binding on wooden boards with coarse blue cotton lining is similar to one published by A. Grohmann in “The Islamic Book” (Plate 22a) as Arabic, IX century. It has a guilloche border, interlaced central medallion and on the soft flap a geometric border panel. The owner attributes it to Turkey, XV century. 20 x 14.7 cm. Lent by Kirkor Minassian

No. 2 A Pair of Leather Covers, Blind Tooled, Gilded and Silvered
Here the artisan worked out the complicated interlacing designs directly on each cover. They form the central panel as well as the borders both inside and outside and the slight checkerboard marking is still visible between the lines. Outside the leather is brown, and inside pale tan with oval central panel ending in two fleurs de lys. See F. Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände. Pls. 4 and 5.
14th-15th Century. 53.8 x 39.5 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 3 Leather Cover, Blind Tooled, Gilded and Silvered
The central panel has a geometrical all over design springing from eight-pointed stars while the border has a similar pattern built on the ten-pointed star. On the inside a circular central medallion is extended into two fleurs de lys, and surrounded by a border of complicated knots.
13th-14th Century. 65 x 42.5 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 4 Leather Cover, Blind Tooled, Gilded, Silvered and Painted
This highly complicated cover design is built around the twelve-pointed star. The circular medallion inside is extended into two fleurs de lys and the border has a stamped design of delicate arabesques. (Illustrated.)
13th-14th Century. 56.8 x 38.7 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 5 Binding with Flap, Blind and Gold Tooling and Openwork. Silk Lining
The use of arabesques and cut openwork on the outside of a binding is well illustrated here. The brown leather was mounted on a thin maculated paper board before it was cut, and green silk, the same as the lining, was inserted.
Published by E. Kühnel: Islamische Kleinkunst, p. 67, Berlin, 1925.
See also F. Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände, Pls. 7 and 8. (Illustrated.)
14th-15th Century. 37.1 x 27.7 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
No. 6 Binding with Blind and Gold Tooling and Openwork. Silk Lining

The composition and technique of this binding is identical with No. 5, but the openwork is cut in a different pattern. The green silk lining in both No. 5 and this piece is a fancy simple cloth with an all over diamond pattern.

14th–15th Century. 37.4 x 27.9 cm
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 7 Leather Binding, Blind Tooled, Gilded and Silvered, with Stamped Leather Lining

Not only the central panel of this brown leather binding but also a greater part of the border is made up of complicated geometric interlaced designs from a twelve-pointed star. Gold and silver have cleverly been utilized to emphasize the order and symmetry. The lining has all over floral designs.
See F. Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände, Pl. 2.
E. Kühnel: Islamische Kleinkunst, p. 66.

13th–14th Century. 37.9 x 26.6 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 8 Leather Binding with Flap, Blind Tooling, Gilded and Silvered. Stamped Leather Lining

The back cover and flap are identical with No. 7. The front has a more angular and complicated geometric pattern developed around a ten-pointed star.
See F. Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände, Pls. 2 and 3.

13th–14th Century. 37.2 x 27.4 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 9 Two Leather Flaps with Blind and Gilded Tooling and Stamped Leather Linings

A flap either (a) carries out a part of the same design as its binding or (b) it retains only the border, and bears an independent design, usually with a central medallion. (Illustrated.)

14th–16th Century. (a) 57 x 20.1 cm. (b) 38.5 x 13.8 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 10 Two Leather Covers, One with Flap, Blind Tooled. Stamped Leather Linings

These pale brown leather bindings have the same decorative composition, and border of a succession of Kufic fleury stamps. The central circular medallion with six-pointed rosette, has interlaced motifs on either side and broken corners. The circular stamps with inscriptions vary,—one, “God is my sufficiency” (See Grohmann: The Islamic Book, plate 24), the other, a signature.
The linings have bold interlacing arabesque designs. (No. 10b illustrated.)

12th–14th Century? (a) 24.4 x 16.4 cm. (b) 25.4 x 17.6 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
Nos. 9а, 10, 5, 9b
No. 11 LEATHER COVER, BLIND TOOLED

This brown cover is typical of the Egyptian patterns showing what may be accomplished with a limited number of tools. The impressions are very sharp and precise. (Illustrated.)

12th–14th Century. 27.5 x 19.3 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 12 BINDING WITH FLAP, BLIND TOOLED, WITH STAMPED LEATHER LINING

One piece of dark brown Morocco leather forms the entire binding. In "Islamische Bucheinbände," Dr. E. Gratzl publishes a similar binding as originating from North West Africa. A few gold punches are used for accents. The lining has a small interlacing vine pattern. (Illustrated.)

13th–16th Century. 26.8 x 18.8 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 13 LEATHER COVER, BLIND TOOLED WITH SILK LINING

Both leather and design are similar to No. 12. The central medallion is an eight-pointed star with two thirds of a circle inserted between each point. The tooling is sharp and accented by a few gold punches. The lining is of pink, plain simple cloth.

13th–16th Century. 55.8 x 39.7 cm.
Lent by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

No. 14 LEATHER BINDING WITH FLAP, BLIND TOOLED WITH STAMPED LEATHER LINING

This brown leather binding shows a restrained use of gold punches. The lining has a worn arabesque design.

A six-pointed star on a fine diaper ground decorates the flap. (Illustrated.)

12th–14th Century? 21.5 x 16 cm. Lent by H. Kevoorkian

PERSIAN

No. 15 BINDING FOR KHAMSAH OF NIZAMI. OUTSIDE, LACQUER RENEWED; INSIDE, TOOLED AND OPENWORK LEATHER

Typical of the Chinese influence in the Timurid period, the inside of this binding has an exquisite brown leather openwork medallion on blue ground. Against fine floral scrolls two flying phoenixes are fighting. The corners have small quarter circle motifs and the cartouches adjoining the medallion have floral sprays, all in blind tooling.

Published by M. S. Dimand in Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts, N. Y., 1930, p. 71.

Manuscript, dated 1449 A.D. 25.8 x 16 cm.
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art
No. 16 Pair of Leather Covers, Painted and Embossed

Bound in pale brown leather, the embossed design is reserved in brown against a gold ground. The painting in green, blue, red, white and lavender is outlined in gold. The designs of the two covers are not identical.

The pale brown leather of the inside is interestingly broken by black leather openwork against cream colored paper. (Illustrated.)

16th Century. 29.3 x 16.4 cm.
Lent by H. Kevorkian

No. 17 Pair of Leather Covers, Gold Painted and Embossed

These brown covers have a gilded guilloche edge and lobed central medallion with appending cartouches. The painting represents flying birds among clouds, phoenix, dragon biting wolf, goats, fox and rabbit, with flowering shrubs on either side of the central panel. The signature with the date (63) has not been deciphered.

16th Century. 19.1 x 12.9 cm.
Lent by H. Kevorkian

No. 18 Embossed Leather Binding with Partly Gilded, Embossed and Openwork Lining

The dark brown leather outside has a few restorations. Inside the central embossed oval medallion has a conventional arabesque design reserved in brown, while the two appending cartouches have black openwork against blue ground. One quarter of the same motif has been used in each corner. Interlacing knots in gold form a narrow border around the edge. (Illustrated.)

16th Century. 25.7 x 14.8 cm.
Lent by Kirkor Minassian

No. 19 Leather Binding with Flap, Gold Painted and Embossed with Openwork Lining

This exquisite binding is in a very fine state of preservation.

The use of two shades of gold against the brown leather and maroon in addition to red, green, blue and black for the background of the openwork lining indicate that it was considered a most important work. (Illustrated.)

16th–17th Century. 35.6 x 23.6 cm.
Lent by Demotte, Inc.

No. 20 Leather Covers, Gold Embossing and Openwork

The large die has been repeated three times on the outside of the cover. At regular intervals in the all over design diamond shaped panels, apparently with openwork on colored ground, are inserted. Now they are much worn. The inside border of embossed gold panels frames a field entirely in openwork like a compartment rug; in gold arabesques against blue, green, black and cream colored backgrounds.

16th–17th Century. 35.4 x 23.9 cm.
Lent by H. Kevorkian
No. 21 LEATHER BINDING WITH FLAP, EMBOSSED AND GILDED OPENWORK, EMBOSSED AND GILDED LINING

Seldom does one find a book and binding still united of such outstanding quality and condition. Two shades of gold on black leather form the outside decoration with the addition of some red in the border. Inside very fine openwork in gold is contrasted against black, red, green and cream colored paper in a design similar to the compartment rugs. In five panels on the flap-joint is a short eulogizing poem on Firdausi the author of the book.

Published by M. S. Dīmand, Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts, N. Y., 1930, p. 75.
E. Kühnel: Islamische Kleinkunst, p. 68.
Frontispiece.

16th Century. 46.5 x 31.2 cm.
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

No. 22 LEATHER BINDING, EMBOSSED AND GILDED WITH OPENWORK AND EMBOSSED LINING

This rich binding in two shades of gold against black leather has an outside decoration nearly identical with No. 19. The dies were undoubtedly cut in the same workshop. Inside, the central panel is like a compartment rug with gold arabesques and cloudbands against a blue, green, red and black ground.

16th–17th Century. 35.6 x 23.6 cm.
Lent by Robert Garrett

No. 23 LEATHER BINDING, EMBOSSED AND GILDED; EMBOSSED, GILDED AND OPENWORK LINING

The outside, in compartment design, has been regilded and relacquered. The embossing inside is sharp and the openwork, partly gilded, is set against blue, red and cream colored paper, and green silk. (Illustrated.)

17th Century. 36.5 x 23.4 cm.
Lent by Robert Garrett

No. 24 EMBOSSED LEATHER BINDING, GILDED, PAINTED AND LACQUERED

In the XVIII or XIX century this binding was evidently regilded and the border panels touched up with black and color before the entire object was coated with yellowish lacquer. Perhaps at that time the leather inside was given its elaborate gilded scrolls of Western design. (Illustrated.)

17th–18th Century. 24.7 x 15.4 cm.
Lent by Robert Garrett

No. 25 BINDING FOR A KORAN, LACQUER ON PASTEBOARD

Roses on a black ground form the central panel which has a polychrome floral meander border on a gold ground. The guardstripes have floral meander in gold reserved on a black ground. Inside the borders are similar and in the central panel is a large composite buté surrounded by flowers on a gold ground.

Signed.

18th–19th Century. 21.7 x 12.6 cm.
Lent by Robert Garrett
No. 23
No. 24
No. 26 Leather Binding and Flap with Gold Embossing. Openwork and Gold Embossed Lining

The central panels on both outside and inside have been extended by a floral border panel across the top and bottom. The border is built up by oblong embossed panels with floral ornaments. The gilded openwork of the lining is set against red and blue paper backgrounds. (Illustrated.)

17th–18th Century. 26.1 x 15 cm. Lent by H. Kevoorkian

No. 27 Leather Binding and Flap with Gold Embossing. Openwork and Gold Embossed Lining

This black leather binding carries Koranic quotations around its outside border. The lining, in poor condition, once had very fine gilded openwork against blue, green, white and red backgrounds. The field in which the openwork medallions and corners were set as well as one of the two borders were gold embossed in low relief, with cloudbands and floral vines. (Illustrated.)

17th Century. 35.6 x 23.7 cm. Lent by Dikran G. Kelekian

No. 28 Leather Binding and Flap with Gold Embossing. Openwork and Gold Embossed Lining

Plainly showing where the embossing plate for the central panel was reversed, this black binding has a central all over pattern of arabesque vines and cloudbands, accented by the use of two shades of gold. The border has floral vines and cloudbands in its oblong gold embossed panels. The lining of similar composition as No. 26 has a very intricate gilded openwork on blue ground and sharply embossed cloudbands and vines in gold.

17th Century. 27.2 x 19.2 cm. Lent by Demotte, Inc.

No. 29 Leather Covers with Gold Embossing and Embossed Openwork Lining

With the same delicacy as on an Indian rug the symmetrical naturalistic flowers lie on the embossed front of this binding, a complete rectangular panel surrounded by a cartouche border. On the inside bold gold lancet leaves and palmettes highly embossed, but in openwork, form a complete rectangular panel against a blue ground. This embossing is perhaps partly executed in papier mache.

See Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände XXI.

17th Century. 17.5 x 9.8 cm. Lent by Demotte, Inc.

No. 30 Leather Cover with Gold Embossing and Embossed Openwork Lining

The black Shagreen cover as well as its decoration of lobed medallion with two cartouches and the usual corners are in a poor state of preservation. Of unusual interest is the red leather lining with its gold openwork decoration of the same composition as the outside, with cloudbands and vines carefully modelled against a blue ground. The two small appending cartouches have the usual flat arabesques against white. A few gold lines.

See Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände XXI.

16th–17th Century. 18.9 x 11.4 cm. Lent by Kirkor Minassian
No. 31  Leather Binding and Flap with Gold Embossing and Openwork Lining

This very fine piece of embossing in two shades of gold on black leather includes beside the central medallion cartouches, corners and border in panels, there are four panels containing quotations from Persian poetry on the stiff joint of the flap,—all beautifully embossed in two shades of gold on black leather.

The inside is in as perfect condition as the outside with brown openwork against blue ground on a dark red field. Narrow gold lines form the border. (Illustrated.)

16th–17th Century. 24.4 x 15.5 cm.
Lent by Kirkor Minassian

No. 32  Leather Binding with Flap, Gold Embossing and Openwork Lining

Very sharp embossing in shades of gold with touches of red on a much thinner leather has been set into the black shagreen which makes up this cover. One quarter of the gold openwork panel and cartouches has been repeated in the corners inside, where it is set against blue and green on a solid red leather ground and held together by a gold guilloche border similar to the outside. (Illustrated.)

16th–17th Century. 19.3 x 13 cm.
The Art Institute of Chicago

No. 33  Leather Binding with Flap, Embossed, Gilded and Tooled. Gilded Openwork Lining

An imitation of early Egyptian bindings like No. 5. The design was embossed in low relief on brown leather and then worked over free-hand. The red leather lining has openwork panels stamped and partly gilded against a blue ground. The border, both outside and inside, is divided in sections and has narrow gold tooled guard stripes.

19th Century. 25.3 x 17 cm.
Lent by H. Kevorkian

No. 34  Lacquer Binding on Leather Covered Pasteboard

This binding has suffered much from the passage of time, but even so the grace of its interwoven gold tendrils with red and yellow palmettes and rosettes on a deep black ground rival the spirited designs of a first-class Polonaise carpet. The central and corner panels as well as the cartouches of the border are deeply embossed and gilded. The inside has fine cut work in black, poorly preserved, against blue, green, red and white panels, and also a depressed gold meander border in relief.

17th Century. 28.5 x 18.5 cm.
Lent by Kirkor Minassian

No. 35  Lacquer Cover on Pasteboard

Vividly drawn animals, black with gold outlines dominate the design: A pair of goats, a lion looking up, two rabbits and a leopard attacking a wild ass are pictured among large naturalistic flowering plants. The sparkle under the transparent red lacquer ground seems to be effected by finely cut tinsel. The edge has a narrow floral motif. The back is painted red with a black and gold edge.

17th Century. 30.6 x 17.7 cm.
Lent by Demotte, Inc.
No. 36 Lacquer Binding with Flap on Leather Covered Pasteboard

The sparkling effect of this piece is due to mother-of-pearl dust which has been used under the lacquer for the background.

The flowers are red, yellow and black, the foliage green and the outlines gold throughout.  *(Illustrated.)*

17th Century. 27.3 x 17.7 cm. Lent by Kirkor Minassian

No. 37 Pair of Painted Covers on Paper Covered Pasteboard

The elaborate central panel is built up of large yellow, grey and salmon colored arabesques, enclosing a four lobed bluish black panel and four buté shaped cartouches, with fine cloudbands and floral sprays throughout. The blue-black cartouches in the border carry a long white inscription. Sketchy black outlines.

See Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände XXXV.

18th Century. 24.2 x 14.8 cm. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

No. 38 Painted Binding on Paper Covered Pasteboard

Central medallion, cartouches and covers in bright red, greyish blue and gold formed by arabesques against vines mostly in gold on a yellowish ground. Black border with simple gold leaves.

Inside red with lacquer and gold border.  *(Illustrated.)*

See Sarre: Islamische Bucheinbände XXXVI.

18th Century. 35.5 x 23.6 cm. Lent by Demotte, Inc.

No. 39 Lacquer Binding on Heavily Chalked Pasteboard

Gold vines bearing green grape leaves cover the black ground. The central panel shows the half figure of a young woman, and the two auxiliary cartouches some naturalistic tulips and strawberry flowers. A floral meander on a black ground forms the border. The back is lacquered red and decorated with gold flowering vines.

18th Century. 30.5 x 19.7 cm. Lent by H. Kevorkian

No. 40 Lacquer Binding on Heavy Pasteboard

The central panel has somewhat conventionalized flowers, birds and butterflies crowded against a gold ground. The wide border has similar decoration with gold outlines against a black ground. Strong reds, green, cobalt blue and white predominate. The inside is greyish blue with a simple gold edge and central medallion.

19th Century. 30.1 x 21.5 cm. Lent by the City Art Museum of St. Louis

No. 41 Pair of Lacquer Covers on Heavy Pasteboard

This example of fine workmanship in the XIX century, done by Mirza Baba, shows on the front a horizontal panel of flowers from a Persian garden: cherry, carnation, rose, anemone and hyacinth against a golden ground. The border with red
cartouches bears a long Persian inscription. The guard stripes are conventionally floral, black and gold. The inside has a conventional floral design, red and green, upon a white ground, with green and gold lobed corners and a border of green and gold meander with red flowers against a pale green ground. The guard stripes are red.

Dated 1225 and signed. 22.9 x 36.2 cm.
Lent by the City Art Museum of St. Louis

NO. 42a HEAVY RED LEATHER PORTFOLIO WITH BLIND EMBOSsing

The die for this portfolio appears to have been of one entire piece, since the corners of the borders are carefully designed.

Dr. E. Gratz mentions in Islamische Bucheinbände, p. 12, portfolios similar but differently decorated in use among the college students in Cairo as late as 1914. (Illustrated.)

Signed and dated Bokhara 1276. Late 19th Century. 28 x 18.9 cm.
Lent by Dikran G. Kelekian

NO. 42b HEAVY BROWN LEATHER PORTFOLIO WITH BLIND EMBOSsing

Here also the die seems to include the entire design as in the previous number. The composition is the same but bolder and the border simpler. Possibly the signature: amal Aṣī Ahmed Shāshī bin Sheikh Ali Qaratashi 1212 was stamped separately over the floral meander border.

Signed and dated 1212. Early 19th Century. 28 x 18.9 cm.
Lent by Kirkor Minassian

TURKISH

NO. 43 LEATHER BINDING, EMBOSSED AND PARTLY GILDED

The central lobed medallion with two auxiliary cartouches is of a somewhat unusual symmetrical design formed by cloudbands and palmette vines. A narrow gold guilloche border and gold arrows framing the medallion complete the design of this dark brown leather binding which has a marbleized paper lining.

17th–18th Century. 28.3 x 18.2 cm. Lent by H. Kevorkian

NO. 44 LEATHER BINDING WITH FLAP, EMBOSSED AND PARTLY GILDED

A lobed medallion and cartouche are embossed in gold on a dark brown ground except for its decoration of palmettes and lancet leaves which are dark red. A narrow gold guilloche border and typical Turkish use of alternating circular punches and arrows in gold complete the design. The flap has a small lobed medallion of similar design.

16th–17th Century. 21.2 x 13.4 cm. Lent by Dikran G. Kelekian

NO. 45 LACQUER BINDING ON PASTEBOARD

Clearly signed and dated 1192 AH. The central panel was probably transferred from a smaller book and enlarged by the red leather borders. Both sides are identical, and an XVIII–XIX century purple satin with small buté in gold is used for the lining. (Illustrated.)

Second half of the 18th Century. 34 x 21.4 cm. Lent by Dikran G. Kelekian
No. 46 LEATHER BINDING WITH FLAP, EMBOSSED AND PARTLY GILDED

Embossed by one plate covering the entire cover except for a narrow border, this brownish black binding is remarkable for the sharpness of its relief. The inside is covered with black shagreen and has embossed corner motifs and central lobed medallion containing palmettes, vines and cloudbands in black on gold ground. The flap bears the same design.  

(Illustrated.)  
17th–18th Century. 13.8 x 8.6 cm.  
Lent by Kirkor Minassian

No. 47 LEATHER BINDING WITH FLAP, EMBOSSED AND PARTLY GILDED

The peculiar use of colored leather in this binding was more noticeable when it was new. Both boards, flap and stiff joint between board and flap were dark brown on the outside and dark red on the inside. The soft joints, both inside and outside, and the back of the book were dark purple. The design is the usual four corners, central medallion and cartouches embossed with red palmette vines on a gold ground and narrow gold guilloche border. Some slight gold tooling and silver spattering on the inside.  

16th–17th Century. 22.7 x 15.5 cm.  
Lent by Demotte, Inc.

No. 48 LEATHER BINDING WITH FLAP, INLAID AND GOLD TOOLED

This flexible cover has a red back, flap-joint and border, and a dark green field and flap with white cartouches and medallion.  
Gold arabesques and rosettes in lacy pattern fill the white spaces which are edged by rosettes and arrows; a triple guilloche border in two shades of gold fill the red border, and a double gold line with knotted corners edge the green field.  
The flap has the same border with a smaller white lobed medallion.  
Marbleized paper lining.  
16th Century. 22.2 x 15.5 cm.  
Lent by Demotte, Inc.

No. 49 LEATHER BINDING, INLAID, EMBOSSED AND GOLD TOOLED

This is another flexible cover with dark blue-grey leather for the back, borders and central medallion with cartouches, and bright red field.  
An embossed design has been used for the central blue-grey panels and for the inner border. The raised design of the border as well as the two narrow guilloche edges are in a paler shade of gold.  
The green leather lining has four straight gold lines.  
(Illustrated.)  
16th–17th Century. 23.9 x 13.3 cm.  
Lent by Demotte, Inc.

No. 50 LEATHER BINDING EMBOSSED AND GILDED

A central elongated four-lobed medallion with two auxiliary cartouches has a palmette and cloudband design in greenish gold on a yellow gold ground. A narrow guilloche border with gold lines and a few punches complete the design of this dark brown leather binding. The flap has a smaller lobed medallion of similar design.  
The lining is of pink paper spattered with silver.  
17th Century. 21.2 x 11.9 cm.  
Lent by Demotte, Inc.  
[ 30 ]