

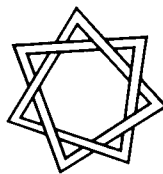
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## **TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH**

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### **CENTRAL ASIAN MANUSCRIPTS' BINDINGS (1730s — 1930s)\***

Central Asian bindings during the period in question were extremely specific — easily recognizable and very similar in appearance (a well-established range of colours, very subdued graphic design, the complete absence of a flap). They were not full leather bindings, but 90% paste-board (*muqawwā'*) [1]. Both covers of such a binding were usually made from poured whole paste-board, although well pasted and pressed paper-board of separate sheets (papier-mâché) was sometimes used. The edges of paste-board covers were strengthened with light, thin, well-worked leather and reinforced with a back spine of the same finish and colour. The back spine sometimes had two tongued flaps that extended upward and downward (1.5—2.0 cm) for pulling the manuscript out of a pile on the shelf (Eastern manuscripts were kept lying, not standing as in Europe).

The practice of producing *muqawwā'* bindings spread rapidly through all the khanates of Central Asia and binding masters (*muqawwā'sāz, ṣahḥāf*) “clothed” manuscripts in Bukhara and Samarqand, Fergana and Kokand, Khiva and Gurgandj. Of course, such bindings were inferior to leather bindings in elegance and artistry; the *muqawwā'* was a much more modest affair. It was, however, durable and functional, and cost several times less than leather, though it was just as hardy. This does not mean that the art of manufacturing leather bindings was entirely eliminated from the repertoire of binders; demand for them simply diminished significantly. They were prepared exclusively to order for calligraphic, illuminated manuscripts and for large-format lithograph editions (from the 1880s on).

The production of *muqawwā'* bindings was standardized and usually consisted of the following: the edges of the paste-board covers were lined with leather of a single colour that covered 0.4—0.5 cm. The back spine, which reinforced both covers, was made of thin leather of the same colour. Paper of a single colour was pasted onto the inner faces of the covers (usually white, but sometimes so-called “marble”-*abrī* [2]); it was usually left unadorned. As a rule, these sheets of paper extended 0.2—0.3 cm over the leather border at the edge of the paste-board. Monotone colour

sheets of paper were usually pasted onto the outer faces of the covers as well, also covering 0.2—0.3 cm of the leather edging. After this, the paper was coated with two or three layers of colourless or pale yellow lacquer. If the colour range of the paper was originally limited to two or three favourite colours (green, claret, deep orange), as time passed it broadened (undoubtedly under the influence of local traditions, tastes, and priorities) to include such colours as yellow, yellow-green, mustard, light-brown, orange, deep-orange, deep-green, pistachio, cherry, raspberry, dark-raspberry, etc. As concerns the colour of the leather backings and edging, there were fewer colour variations. One notes a preference for red, brown, dark-red, green, and orange. No well-defined pattern of colour combinations emerges for the backings, edgings, and covers. In selecting contrasting colours, the binder apparently relied both on tradition and, to a significant degree, his own taste, experience, and possibly his client's wishes. Still, Kokand and Khivan binders displayed a marked preference for darker hues: claret, dark-raspberry, dark-brown, cherry, and black. This led to corresponding contrasts in the colours of the leather edging and back spines: light-green, pale-orange, light-brown, sometimes blue or pale-raspberry.

*Muqawwā'* bindings bore limited adornment and displayed little variation. Decoration usually consisted of various lines in geometric formation; straight embossed lines (*tarāq*) along the entire border (usually two parallel lines), or two radial lines (bisecting the corners) that sometimes intersected in the centre. In a number of cases, a border lined the edges in the form of a chain with oval, lancet-shaped, or rectangular (*band-i rūmī*) links. More rarely one finds an embossed wavy line along the border, more frequently painted. The outer faces of the covers bore an embossed oval boss (*turunj*), usually with floral ornamentation; above and below it were two vertical embossed palmettes (*sarturunj*) [3]. In the overwhelming majority of cases, these palmettes, reminiscent in shape of a stylized lotus flower or one of its petals, contained the binder's personal stamp. Such stamps are typical of Central Asian

\* Except for a highly informative article by G. N. Chabrov (see “K izucheniiu sredneaziatskogo knizhnogo pereplēta” (“On the study of Central Asian book-bindings”), *Narody Azii i Afriki*, 2 (1964), pp. 136—41. There is an English translation of the article in *Manuscripta Orientalia*, VII/1, pp. 60—6. In my article, I refer to the Russian version of Chabrov's work), I know of no works specifically on this topic aside from two unpublished studies by Prof. A. A. Semenov to which Chabrov refers in his article.

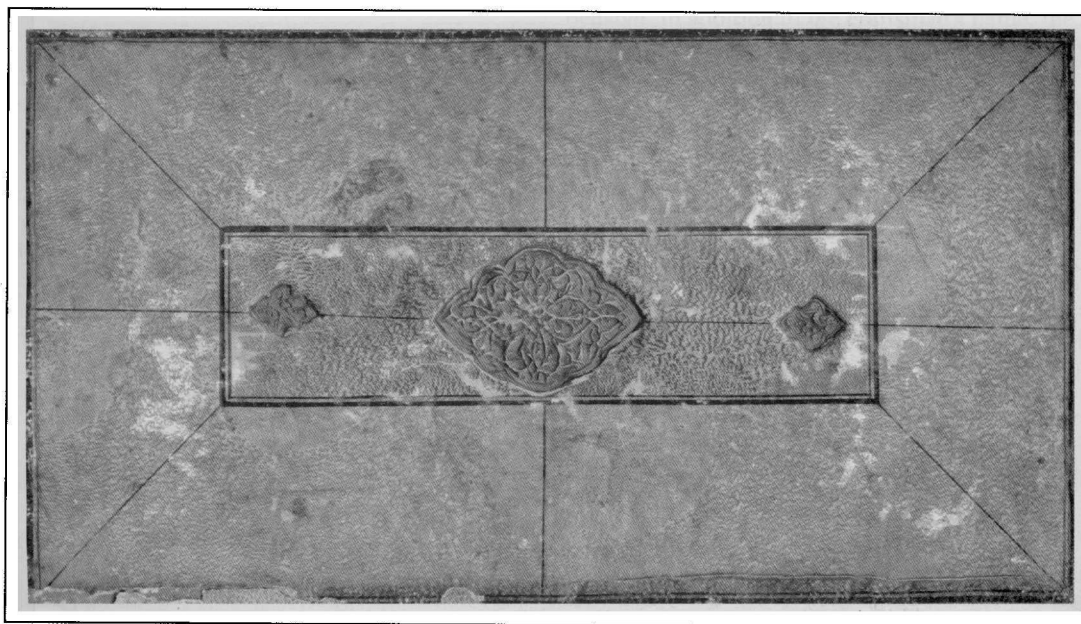


Fig. 1

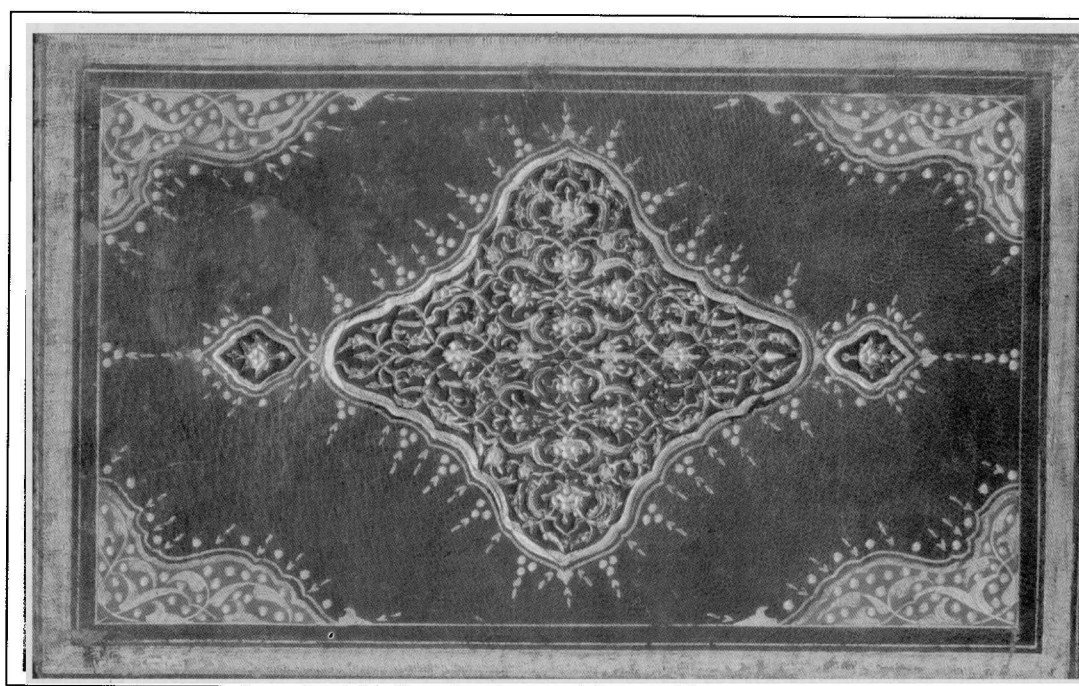
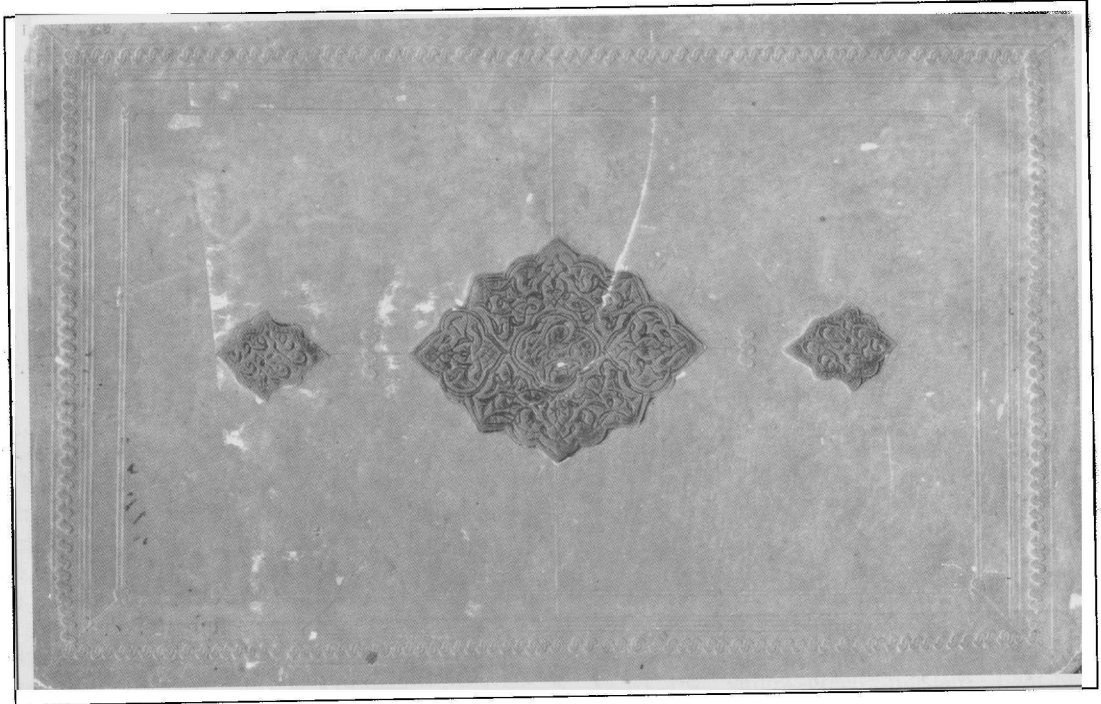
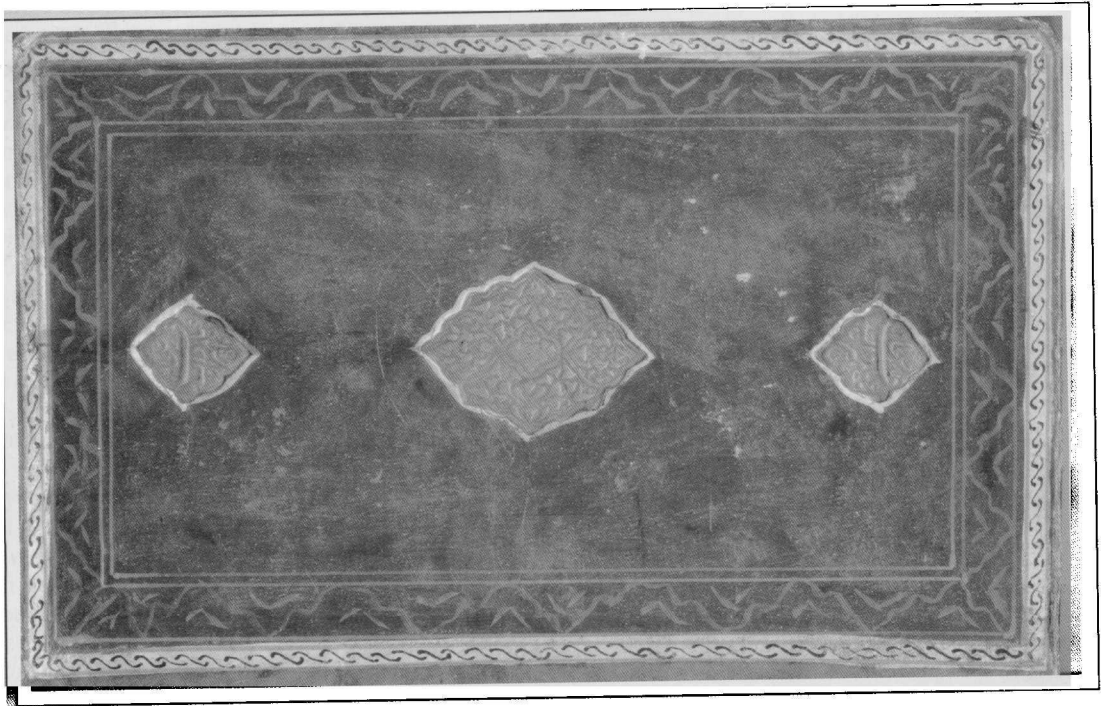


Fig. 2



*Fig. 3*



*Fig. 4*

bindings from the mid-eighteenth century to 1930s. The stamps displayed a standard text: *'amala fulān ṣaḥḥāf* (“executed by the so-and-so binder”). The colour range of the boss and palmettes contrasted with the colour of the covers — either a gold, yellowish, light-red, etc., background.

Binders usually placed their name stamps in the palmettes, although in some rare cases one finds their names in the boss medallion, which customarily performed an ornamental function. It seems that the boss could also contain the name of the client or the manuscript's owner. For example, manuscript A 500 from the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, bound by Ḥātim-khwāja (according to the stamp in the palmettes), has a boss with the owner's name and date: mullā ‘Abdallāh ‘Aṭṭār, 1275/1858 [4]. Naturally, craftsmen varied the decoration; we know of bindings with two palmettes above and below the boss or with an extra or third palmette in place of a boss. In one extremely rare case this was occasioned by a need to indicate the work of three craftsmen on a single binding; it was executed in 1274/1857–58 by Qādir Muḥammad, Ḥusayn Riḍanaqqāsh and ‘Āshūr Aḥmadī [5]. It should be noted that the first and third of them worked together on the binding of another copy in 1285/1868–69 [6]. Craftsmen rarely indicated their location in their stamp. I know of only one such case: Ḥusayn Dhākir bound three *mathnawīs* from the *Khamsa* by ‘Alīshīr Nawā’i in Khorezm in 1217/1802–03 [7]. A specific feature of some bindings created in the second half of the eighteenth century are four vertically arranged palmettes in the centre of the covers' outer faces; the two outer palmettes contained the craftsmen's stamps, while the central palmettes were ornamental. The same function was performed by two palmettes on the leather (!) tongue of the binding.

The right to use an individual stamp (*muhr*) with one's own name and date — the right to work as a craftsman — was conferred on a binder after an apprenticeship and

sample work approved by his teacher and leading craftsmen. After becoming a craftsman, he would order a stamp (*muhr*), usually poured in Kokand either from brass or “Eastern bronze” (*haftjūsh*), an alloy of seven metals: iron, zinc, tin, lead, copper, silver, gold. Stamps were very expensive. In addition to the craftsman's name, the stamp usually (but not always) indicated the date, customarily the date of his ascendance to craftsman status. Because of their cost, craftsmen rarely acquired stamps with new dates, or ordered them only at significant intervals. This explains the sometimes significant discrepancies between the date of the binding's completion and time of the copy's completion: upon comparison, one sometimes finds that the manuscript was “clothed” long before it was copied [8]. Of course, this concerns copies completed during a craftsman's lifetime. We note that binders did not prepare bindings in advance.

As concerns format, one should note that the most popular and widespread proportion of height to width was 1.5:1.0, or 18.0×12.0 cm, 24.0×18.0 cm, 30.0×20.0 cm; much more rarely one encounters the dimensions 36.0×24.0 cm or larger for lithograph editions. Naturally, there are deviations, but they were usually minor.

The basis for this study was provided by a records culled by the author from six catalogues of manuscript descriptions [9] and work “de visu” with approximately one third of the so-called “Bukharan collection” of V. A. Ivanov (1915) [10]. The author's records cover 603 bindings by 189 Central Asian craftsmen. The earliest of them is a binding completed by Muḥammad Raḥīm b. mullā [Taḳī]-ṣaḥḥāf dated 1161/1748 [11], and the latest by mullā Ishān-Qul dated 1342/1923 [12]. The most productive (or most popular) binders in the author's files are Muḥammad Nāṣir-ṣaḥḥāf (mid-19th century): 19 bindings; mullā Yūldāsh-ṣaḥḥāf (second half of the 19th century): 20 bindings; and mir ‘Ādil-khwāja ṣaḥḥāf (1870s—1930s): 31 bindings. Of course, the data are not complete enough to establish definite tendencies, although the author has tried to draw what objective conclusions are possible in the present article.

## Notes

1. According to Chabrov, Semenov called this type of binding — where the “covers, pasted over in leather, are reinforced by a leather spine” — “half-leather” (Chabrov, *op. cit.*, p. 136).

2. A special type of decorative paper that received its name from the floral designs and veins that render it reminiscent of marble. It was usually used for the margins in richly illuminated manuscripts. There are several accounts of the craftsmen who developed the techniques of its production. Judging by the manuscripts with *abri* paper that have reached us, however, it was created in 1470-90 in the court workshop of Herat, or in the analogous workshop of Aq-Qyunlu in Tebriz. It is produced in the following fashion: various paints are filtered by drop into a vat or round trough that contains a watery, jellyish paste-like decoction of onion or flax seeds. The paint is lighter than the mixture and floats on the surface. The craftsmen carefully spreads the paint over the pastelike surface of the liquid, forming whatever designs he wishes. A sheet of paper is then laid over this; when the paint has been absorbed, the paper is removed and dried. After drying, the craftsman usually applied paint with a brush to highlight the contours of the design. During the period mentioned above, this production technique had been long forgotten in Central Asia, and craftsmen simply used oil paints to imitate marble. See Y. Porter, *Painters, Paintings and Books* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 45–9; also *Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2000), p. 269.

3. One should note that the dimensions of palmette-*sarturunj*s varied, as one might expect, in accordance with manuscript format (see below). In the main, they corresponded to the dimensions given by Chabrov (*op. cit.*, p. 141); small dimensions had the following heights and widths: 1.8×1.5 cm, 2.1×1.6 cm, 3.0×2.3 cm; medium: 3.2×2.4 cm, 3.6×2.9 cm, etc.

4. Manuscript A 500 is a collection of Sūfī poetry. Yellow-green binding, backing and edging in red leather. See *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR. Kratkii alfavitnyi katalog* (Persian and Tajik Manuscripts at the USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of Asian Peoples. A Concise Alphabetical Catalogue), pt. I, ed. N. D. Miklukhlo-Maclay (Moscow, 1964), No. 3893. The same master bound two manuscripts from the Tajikistan collection: composite manuscript No. 1236 (“green binding with raspberry and yellow medallions”) and a copy of the *Silsilat al-dhahāb* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, No. 1878 (“binding in raspberry leather”). See *Katalog*

vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR (Catalogue of Eastern Manuscripts at the Tajik SSR Academy of Sciences), vol. 2 (Dushanbe, 1968), Nos. 607, 656; vol. 5 (Dushanbe, 1974), Nos. 1692–1697. He also bound a copy of the *Bayād*, No. 88 from the collection of the former Institute of manuscripts in Tashkent (“green paste-board binding”). See *Katalog fonda Instituta rukopisei Akademii nauk Uzbekskoi SSR* (Catalogue of the Collection at the Institute of Manuscripts of the Uzbek SSR Academy of Sciences), vol. 2 (Tashkent, 1988), No. 704. This Institute has since been liquidated and all of its manuscript holdings given to the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.

5. Copy of the poem *Shāh wa darwīsh* by Badr al-Dīn Hilālī from the collection of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (No. 1376/IV). See *Katalog vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR*, vol. 3, No. 826 (“Central Asian binding, yellowish with medallions”).

6. They bound a manuscript of Nāzīm's poem *Yūsuf wa Zulaykhā* from the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan collection (No. 1977). See *Katalog vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR*, vol. 3, No. 1012 (“Central Asian binding, green, with three raspberry medallions”). We note that the copy of the poem is dated 1287/1870–71, while the binding was made in 1285/1868–69 (date given in the craftsman's personal stamps). One can cite another example of a joint effort by two binders: ḥājji ‘Abd al-Shukūr-ṣaḥḥāf and Iskandar-ṣaḥḥāf made in 1316/1898–99 a “binding, Eastern, black-raspberry, with a narrow greenish border and light-brown medallions”; it is a copy of the poem *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqat* by Sanā’i Ghaznavī. See *ibid.*, vol. 2, No. 346.

7. The copy was made by mullā Šāliḥ Kāshgharī in 1217/1802–03; it is held in the collection of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (“Central Asian binding, yellow-green, with three brown medallions”). See *ibid.*, vol. 3, No. 777.

8. Typical example: the Bukharan craftsman Muḥammad Ṣarīf-ṣaḥḥāf marked six of 12 bindings with a stamp dated 1217/1802–03, although the manuscripts bear other dates of copying: 1221/1806–07, 1226/1811, and 1269/1852–53. Only a copy of the *Dīwān-i Imlā’* from the collection of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (No. 1835) bears in the palmettes the date 1257/1841–42. As it turns out, he changed his stamp only 40 years later. See *Katalog fonda Instituta rukopisei Akademii nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, vol. 2, Nos. 708, 790, 802; *Katalog vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR*, vol. 2, No. 451; vol. 3, No. 903; vol. 5, Nos. 1508, 1511, 1665, 1673; vol. 6, Nos. 1997, 2053; *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Uzbekskoi SSR* (Collection of Eastern Manuscripts at the Uzbek SSR Academy of Sciences) (Tashkent, 1952–1987), vol. 8, No. 5812; *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR. Kratkii alfavitnyi katalog*, pt. 1, Nos. 45, 634, 1736.

9. See *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, vols. 1–11; *Katalog vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR*, vols. 1–6; A. T. Tagirdzhanov, *Opisanie tadzhikskikh i persidskikh rukopisei Vostochnogo otdela biblioteki Leningradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta* (Description of the Tajik and Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the Leningrad State University), vol. 1 (Leningrad, 1962); *Katalog fonda Instituta rukopisei Akademii nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, vols. 1–2; *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR*, pts. 1–2; N. B. Khalimov, *Katalog arabskikh rukopisei Akademii nauk Turkmenkoi SSR* (Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts at the Turkmen SSR Academy of Sciences) (Ashkhabad, 1988).

10. On the collection and its composition, see V. I. Beliaev, “Arabskie rukopisi Bukharskoi kollektzii Aziatskogo muzeia Instituta vostokovedeniia AN SSSR” (“Arab manuscripts from the Bukharan collection of the Asiatic Museum at the USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of Oriental Studies”), *Trudy Instituta vostokovedeniia Akademii nauk SSSR*, II (Leningrad, 1932). Also V. A. Ivanov, “Spiski rukopisei Bukharskoi kollektzii” (“Copies of manuscripts from the Bukharan collection”), with foreword and notes by Iu. E. Borshchevsky, in *Pamiatniki pis’mennosti Vostoka. Ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 407–36.

11. This binding is typically Central Asian merely by its outward appearance: yellow outer covers, dark-yellow edging and back, broad embossed borders along the edges of the covers, three identically sized palmette-*sarturunj*s vertically arranged in the centre, each bearing the name of the binder (*ṣaḥḥāf*) and date. See *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi Instituta narodov Azii AN SSSR*, pt. 1, No. 4246 (a collection of official documents in copies as well as sample stencils for composing them; call number A 210).

12. He made a “Central Asian, green binding” for a copy of Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāma* from the collection of the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences, No. 1818. See *Katalog vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR*, vol. 5, No. 1732.

### Illustrations

- Fig. 1.** *Majmu‘a-yi shā‘irān-i Faḍlī*, manuscript C 104 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, 1263/1847–48. *Muqawwā’* binding, binder ‘Umar Mīrzā b. Āqā, date of the binding 1258/1842–43, Central Asia, 17.8×31.9 cm.
- Fig. 2.** *Dīwān-i Shawkat*, manuscript C 854 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, 1161/1748. *Muqawwā’* binding, binder Muḥammad, date of the binding 1204/1789–90, Central Asia, 14.0×22.6 cm.
- Fig. 3.** *Majma‘ al-anṣāb* by Shabāngāra‘ī (autograph), manuscript C 1096 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, late 14th century. *Muqawwā’* binding, binder Mīr ‘Ādil Khwāja-ṣaḥḥāf, date of the binding 19th century, Central Asia, 16.0×24.7 cm.
- Fig. 4.** *Khulāṣat al-akhbār fī bayān ahwāl al-akhyār* by Khwānd-Amīr, manuscript C 812 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Shawwāl 1008 / April — May 1600. *Muqawwā’* binding, binder Mīr ‘Ibādallāh-ṣaḥḥāf, date of the binding 1245/1829–30, Kishm, 17.5×25.8 cm.