



News & Notes

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The Oriental Institute

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THE INSTITUTE MUSEUM OPENS TWO EXHIBITIONS

Alexander and the East on May 27

Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking on May 18

ALEXANDER AND THE EAST



Decorated bronze band from Persepolis, an imported Greek work.

By Helene J. Kantor
Professor of Near
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The Oriental Institute

The conquest of the Achaemenid empire by Alexander the Great marks one of the major turning points in human history. Innovations in art and new ways of thought were probably eventually even more momentous developments than the dramatic shift in political power from the ancient oriental dynasties to those established after the death of Alexander by the rival Macedonian generals who divided his empire among themselves. For example, classical Greek, and, later, Roman art and architecture influenced the East, as exemplified in Egypt by hybrid Egyptian-Greek tombs or by the Fayum portraits; in Anatolia and Syria by the many great Graeco-Roman cities and the hybrid art of Parthian Dura-Europos; and, far to the east, by the arts of the Greek kingdom of Bactria and the Buddhist kingdom of Gandhara. The importance of intellectual developments in philosophy and religion also cannot be overestimated.

Alexander's conquest was, however, only a late development in the interaction between East and West. This had begun long before in prehistoric times, and had reached an intense peak in the second part of the second millennium B.C. (ca. 1500-1200 B.C.) when Mycenaean Greeks found their way to most parts of the Levant. After the disruption caused by the numerous folk migrations around the end of the second millennium B.C., the evolution of classical Greek civilization was tremendously stimulated by the great oriental civilizations. This is exemplified by the development of the Greek script on the basis of the Phoenician alphabet, by innumerable influences in art, and by the testimony of numerous Greek authors such as Herodotus. By the time of the Achaemenid dynasty (559-330), flourishing Greek city states of Ionia were under Persian rule. Greek physicians resided at the Persian court, and Greek craftsmen assisted in the construction of the great buildings of the Persian capitals, introducing Greek techniques of stone cutting. Many traces of Greek decorative art were recovered at Persepolis.

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ISLAMIC BINDINGS AND BOOKMAKING

At press time of News and Notes, a two-day symposium of eight lectures by well known authorities from the United States, Europe and the Near East, keynotes the opening of the Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking exhibition at the Oriental Institute. The exhibition consists of the Institute's own collection of medieval Islamic bindings and books, most of which have never been previously exhibited. They were acquired in 1929 by the Institute's founder, James Henry Breasted, from the German Orientalist, Bernard Moritz. Dr. Moritz was director of the Khedivial Library in Cairo before the first World War, and it is probable that much of his collection was bought in Egypt, although it contains items from all over the Islamic world.

The symposium, the exhibition, and catalogue have been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The exhibition is too fragile to travel so it will be shown only in Chicago, but a detailed and liberally illustrated catalogue has been produced by The University of Chicago Printing Department, and is available from the Museum (hard cover \$40, paper-

(Continued on page 3)

Qadi Ahmad wrote of Maulana Qasim-Beg-Tabrizi: (He) was an incomparable bookbinder, a peerless master of leather binding. He was so unique and skillful that he would have sewed the pages of Fate in the back of the binding, and with the binding knife would have levelled the days of Destiny; his work in the corner pieces (kunj) was similar to stars, and that in medallions (turunj) like the sun.



A Mughal bookbinder working on a bookcover. A marginal painting from a leaf of the Jahangir Album, c. 1600-1610 A.D. Courtesy of Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 54.116.

Alexander and the East (Continued)

From the palace of Xerxes: King and Attendants on east jamb of western doorway in north wall of Main Hall. Direction of view is southeast.

The Museum's exhibition, Alexander and the East, presents specific exhibits illustrating many facets of the exceedingly complex historic developments in which the meteoric career of Alexander was the most dramatic single incident. The Oriental Institute is in a unique position to mount such an exhibition, since one of its major expeditions, directed by Ernst Herzfeld (1931-1934) and Erich Schmidt (1935-1938), excavated Persepolis, the best preserved of the capitals of the dynasty founded by Cyrus, a descendant of the Persian chieftain Achaemenes. On the great terrace of Persepolis the expedition found monumental buildings decorated by magnificent reliefs, as well as objects of many kinds. Various of these finds, exhibited in the Museum's Persian Hall, form the core of the Alexander and the East exhibition. They are supplemented by objects elsewhere in the Museum, all marked by special labels.

The Alexander and the East exhibition has four themes:

I. The life of Alexander himself. After defeating Darius III at the battle of Gaugamela in 331 B.C., Alexander marched into Iran, where the end of the last empire of the ancient orient was strikingly marked by the sack of Persepolis. Masses

of arrow heads and fragments of elegant stone vessels are vivid mementos of this event. According to legend, Persepolis was intentionally burned to revenge the sacking of Attica in 480 B.C., but the firing of the palaces could have been accidental; Alexander cherished a policy of reconciliation in which Greeks and Persians were to be partners in a new empire. Before he could implement his plans, he died prematurely in the ancient imperial city of Mesopotamia, Babylon, which is represented in the Oriental Institute Museum by two glazed tile lions from the Ishtar Gate.

II. The orient which Alexander captured. Monumental inscriptions and sculptures from Persepolis display the glory of the Achaemenids. As in earlier Assyrian palaces, pairs of stone animals guarded the entrances to important buildings. The head of such a huge guardian bull forms the focal point of the Persian Hall in the Oriental Institute Museum. The roofs of the great Achaemenid reception halls rested on lofty columns topped by capitals in the shape of double lion, bull, or bull-man protomes. Restored examples are on display in the Institute Museum. The fragment of a bull-man capital, on loan to The Art Institute of Chicago, shows the integrity of the Persian craftsmen; sculptures to be placed high above eye level were executed with the same care and elegance as works to be seen at close range.

Achaemenid art developed its own style, marked by a masterly fusion of naturalistic and decorative elements. The same motifs and ornamental details, executed with the same disciplined verve, appear in both the monumental and decorative arts. In the Persian corridor of the Museum, the close similarity between a fragment of a large lion-head capital and a small lion of an ornamental roundel is apparent. The unity of Achaemenid art throughout the empire is shown by an Egyptian object, a stone plaque of the type used as models for craftsmen, with animals in Persian style. The cultural and political unity of the Achaemenid empire rested on a sophisticated economic and administrative system marked by royal roads and couriers, standardized coinage, and hierarchies of officials who kept voluminous records. Samples of the thousands of clay tablets found at Persepolis are on exhibit. They yield a wealth of information concerning the local administration of the Persepolis region. Even the careers of individual officials can be reconstructed from the inscriptions and the seal impressions of the tablets.

III. The Greek-Persian contacts before Alexander. The pre-occupation of Greek historiography with the wars between the small Greek city states and the Achaemenid empire has frequently led to a one-sided picture. West and East were not irreconcilable antagonists. Rather, the activities of Greeks and Persians, on many levels of society—rulers, high officials,



Persepolis: Seal impression of a trireme vessel, probably reign of Xerxes (485-465 B.C.)



Persepolis tablet with impression, of a Greek seal.



Seal Impression with chariot rendered in Greek Style.

Alexander and the East (Continued)

Persepolis: Apadana—central facade of northern stairway (direction view, south).

doctors, craftsmen, and adventurous travellers—brought West and East into mutually stimulating contacts. Another theme of the Museum exhibition is the wealth of such connections before the time of Alexander, as illustrated by finds at Persepolis such as the fragment of an archaic Greek plaque, an Ionian statue of the 5th century B.C., and the imprints of Greek signet rings on the tablets. Knowledge of such contacts and mutual appreciation make Alexander's attitude toward the conquered Persians easier to understand.

IV. The Post-Alexander period. The flood of Greek influence into the Hellenistic states is illustrated by the use of Greek monumental inscriptions in Egypt and at Persepolis, and by the representations of Ptolemaic rulers in the guise of earlier Egyptian ones. Gandharan sculptures from India dating to the early centuries of the Christian era represent even more far-ranging Greek influences. Less tangible but even more persistent are the ways of thought developed by the mingling of Hellenic and Oriental civilizations which still remain influential today.



Closeup showing the sword hanging from the belt of the King's weapon bearer—from relief found in the Treasury at Persepolis.



Bronze javelin head from Persepolis.

Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking Exhibition (Continued from page 1)

back \$20). The catalogue also has a section on the historic setting of Islamic bookmaking, and another on the materials, techniques and structures of Islamic bookmaking, plus a very extensive bibliography.

Detailed information bearing on Islamic bookbinding is scattered in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources and is therefore not easily accessible to the English reader. Relative datings and stylistic groupings of Islamic bookbindings have received a great deal of attention from Western scholars; but the relations between the bookbinder and the booktrade, the varied influences promoting the production itself with regional modifications in process and style, have been less generally known. The catalogue, therefore, with the aid of new sources and materials, stresses the historical, technical, and stylistic aspects of Islamic bookbindings, and takes a total approach to the materials, tools and processes of the Islamic book. It also discusses the Islamic disposition toward the arts and crafts in general in order to appreciate better the status of the bookbinder in particular.

There are over a hundred bindings and books in the Institute's exhibition, with many fine examples from the 12th to the 17th centuries. Other bindings once in Dr. Moritz's collection and now divided among several European museums, supplement the Institute's material. Displayed too are two rare copies from Dr. Moritz's collection of an 11th century treatise on Islamic bookbinding, entitled "The Staff of the Scribes and Implements of the Discerning" written by Tamin ibn al-Mu'izz ibn Badis. The exhibition correlates the techniques mentioned by Ibn Badis with actual examples of such work. Other sections of the exhibition treat the technical aspects of Islamic book production, and its unique contribution to the history and craft of bookbinding. It consists not only of examples of fine bindings, but is also planned as an investigation into the whole process of Islamic bookmaking, and the great importance of the book in the medieval Islamic world. The craft of book production involved religious, economic and artistic factors which were not only the concern of the Islamic world but also had their extension and influence into Europe and the Western world.

The exhibition demonstrates the art of Islamic bookbinding in the cultural setting of the medieval Islamic world. It not only illustrates the specialized craft techniques involved in book production, but also emphasizes the importance of the Islamic book, and the Qur'an in particular, in the everyday life

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The cover of an Islamic bookbinding. Egypt/Syria, 14th century A.D.

Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking Exhibition (Continued)

of the millions of individuals in the Islamic world, both in the past and today. The Qur'an, composed of the revelations of the Prophet Muhammad, is at the core of all Islamic thinking and creativity, just as the Torah is for the Jews and the Bible for Christians. The exhibition is intended to interest the public on many different levels. By presenting an unfamiliar major art form, it should have aesthetic appeal; the craft of Islamic book production as the precursor of methods surviving to our own times is of great technical interest; and the cultural background of the Islamic world which produced the books is also explored in detail.

In recent years, many exhibitions and publications have dealt with Arabic calligraphy and manuscript illumination, both most important aspects of the Islamic book. But so far little attention has been paid to the concept and execution of the Islamic book as a whole, that is, an enterprise involving a whole series of skills and individuals. These include the author, the paper-maker, the scribe, the illuminator, the leather-worker, and the bookbinder, as well as the bookseller, and ultimately the reader himself. Nor must one forget the role of the patron or merchant who conceived (and financed) the enterprise in the first place.

From the multiplication of the pre-eminent Book of Islam an organization mushroomed for the production and marketing of books throughout the Islamic world. It did not appear like a jinn out of the sands of the Arabian desert. Many of its practices and certain elements in its organization had been inherited from the Christians, Manichaeans, and Jews. But the widespread zest for learning, which centered in the study of the Qur'an and Traditions about the life and sayings of Muhammad and his Companions, was contagious and extended to great quantities of books of scientific research in history and geography and to a literature filled with poetry and tales of adventure.

The organization behind the book trade was tightly interwoven. It was composed of many branches and stretched like a web across the Islamic world. Theological attitudes towards the crafts allied to book production were important as toward all Muslim activities. The theologians agreed with public opinion in extolling the crafts generally but differed with it in the question of the arts. Through the association with the Qur'an, however, the bookbinder might assume the stature of an artist without discredit.

Therefore, we find the bookbinders were esteemed as craftsmen and as men of standing in their communities; and their craft was not unbecoming to Qadis, or judges. Sometimes the bookbinder is difficult to identify because the term

warraq was used for persons engaged in many of the different branches of the book trade. But whether this art served as an avocation, as in the case of the Ibn Badis, the 12th century sovereign of a realm, or as a vocation, its products, i.e., the bindings, are among the greatest glories of the book. Some of the bindings even preserve the names of their book binders as part of the ornamentation of their covers.

The craft of Islamic bookmaking was a conservative one, many of the categories of tools, materials, techniques and structures evidenced from the early centuries of Islam being retained right through the present day in workshops carrying on the tradition. Basic structural changes were introduced slowly and were in response to the introduction of new materials, such as paper, or in favor of a single form out of a number of variations offered by the cultures by which Islamic bookmaking was tutored, such as the case binding with wrap-around foreedge and envelope flap. The desire for an efficiently executed assemblage of techniques can be seen in this classic form of the Islamic book, sometimes at the expense of durability. However, in the realm of decoration there were few concessions to expediency and continuing exertions were made to achieve quality and variety of invention. It is in this area that we see the most signs of change and evolution, though the most popular forms survived for centuries before being superseded.

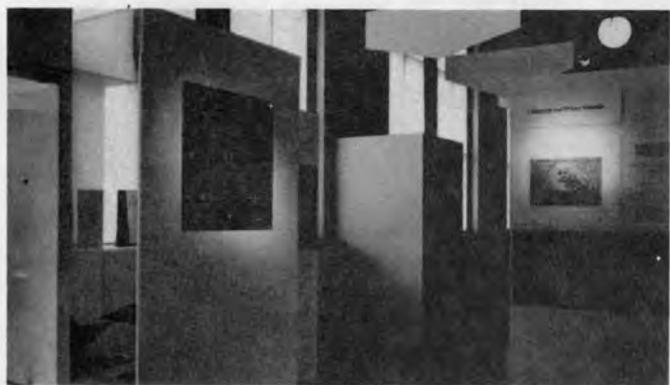
Crafts and professions have in a measure been praised from early Islamic times. A few early examples of the sayings of the Prophet and his Companions are to the point. Muhammad urged his son-in-law, 'Ali, to turn his grandsons toward a craft while young. To those who sought counsel from the Prophet, he gave advice: "God loves the truthful merchant and sincere craftsman." When 'Umar, the second Caliph, took stock of a man he asked him if he had a trade or craft. If the answer was "no," he looked upon him with contempt. It was through respect for the craftsman from the bookreading public, together with the strength of the craft tradition in the passing on of techniques from the master to apprentice that Islamic bookbindings of such competence, from the luxurious court productions to the most modest manual, were produced for such an extraordinarily long time.

The planning of the Exhibition and the catalogue has been a cooperative effort, drawing on the individual resources of each of three collaborators, united in a common desire to do justice to the subject of Islamic bookbinding and bookmaking on all its levels of historical, aesthetic, and technical complexity. Collaborators were John Carswell, Curator of the Oriental Institute Museum, who for twenty years taught in the Department of Fine Arts at the American University of Beirut, travelled extensively throughout the Middle East, published books on Islamic tiles and pottery, and organized many exhibitions and festivals; Gulnar Kheirallah Bosch, Islamic art historian, who wrote her doctoral dissertation here at the University of Chicago on Moritz's bindings in the Oriental Institute, and is now Professor Emeritus at Florida State University; Guy Petherbridge, conservator/historian of medieval bookbindings editor of *The Paper Conservator* who wrote his research thesis for the *Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts*, London, on Byzantine and post-Byzantine book-binding structures.



A detail of the tooling of the flap of an Islamic bookbinding. Egypt/Syria, 15th. century A.D.

ISLAMIC BOOKBINDING & BOOKMAKING



FROM THE MEMBERSHIP OFFICE

Dear Members,

The Museum Office is planning a project to compile bibliographic and photographic information on various past and present faculty and staff members. One or two volunteers are needed to gather the information at times convenient to their own schedules. For more information, please contact John Larson, Acting Archivist at 753-2475.

If your trip to Egypt includes a visit to Luxor, where you would like to tour Chicago House, headquarters of the Oriental Institute, please let the Membership Office here know as far in advance as possible, so we can alert Dr. Lanny Bell, the Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey in Chicago House, to anticipate your visit.

Members are also advised to contact Chicago House upon their arrival in Luxor (telephone 2525), to arrange for the most convenient time to visit the House, in terms of their own travel plans, the work schedule of the Epigraphic Survey, and the prior commitments of the Survey staff members. Dr. Bell reports that he has been able to show members around on very short notice, even on his days off and as late as 10:00 P.M., but he regrets that there have been occasions when it has been impossible to accommodate members who arrive unexpectedly for a visit.

Because we want all interested members to have an occasion to visit Chicago House, to meet the staff, and to be introduced to the work of the Survey, we hope that you will please keep in mind the need to follow this procedure, which will give our representatives in Luxor the opportunity to maximize the time of your visit.

Two tours are going to be offered by the Institute this coming year: 21 day tour of EGYPT in February-March and a 16 day tour of GREECE in May. Further details and itineraries will be announced later this summer. Please watch for those announcements.

The members' lecture series topic has been decided for next year. It is "Technology and Technological Change in the Near East". The opening lecture and reception are tentatively planned for October 1. Please watch for announcements later this summer and early fall.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that my last day as membership secretary was May 31. I have resigned, and hope to spend much more time on completing my dissertation. During the past 19 months I have had the pleasure of meeting and making friends with a large number of fine people, all of whom are members of the Institute and who have contributed a great deal to making my job as membership secretary an easier task. Susan Smith has been named as my successor, and I am sure she will have the same feelings about working with the membership of the Institute as I have. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Eugene Cruz-Urbe
Membership Secretary

MEMBERS' COURSES FOR SUMMER QUARTER

Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs

Lecturer: John Larson

We are again offering our popular introductory course of the picture writing of Ancient Egypt. The eight sessions of the course will give the beginner a good introduction to the writing and grammar of the language. Use will be made of Faulkner's Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian. Grammar handouts will be available at each class session.

8 class sessions, 10:00 A.M. - noon, Saturdays

The Greeks and the Barbarian East

Lecturer: Shelby Brown

The Greek expansion into the eastern Mediterranean, beginning in the Bronze Age and culminating in the conquest of Alexander the Great, forms the basis for this seven week course. The interactions of the Greeks as traders, scoundrels and mercenaries with the cultures of Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus, and Asia Minor play a major part in the history of the last millennium B.C. Both Greek and Near Eastern sources will be utilized to present a concise picture of the Greek influence on the culture, religions and economies of this diverse region. This course is offered to supplement viewing of the Institute's exhibition Alexander and the East presently on display at the Oriental Institute and the Alexander show at the Art Institute of Chicago.

7 class sessions, 10:00 A.M. - noon, Saturdays

Both courses begin June 27, 1981. No classes are scheduled for the Fourth of July weekend.

Tuition: \$50.00 for members, \$65.00 for non-members (which includes a membership in the Oriental Institute)

Please register by THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 1981. For more information call the Membership Office, 753-2389.

REGISTRATION FORM

Please register me for the following Members' Course:

- Egyptian Hieroglyphs (\$50 tuition)
- The Greeks and the Barbarian East (\$50 tuition)
- I am a member.
- I am not a member, but enclose a separate check for \$15 to cover a one year membership.

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Please make all checks payable to "THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE". Please register by Thursday, June 25, 1981. Thank you.

**The Oriental Institute**

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