

A Study of Binding Methods and Techniques in Safavid Era Emphasizing on Iran Shahnamehs (16-18th Century AD/10-12th Century AH)

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Abstract : The art of binding was simple and elementary at the beginning of Islam. This art thrived gradually and continued its development as an independent art. Identification of the binding techniques and used materials in covers and investigation of the arrays give us indexes for the better identification of different doctrines and methods of that time. The catalogers of the manuscripts usually pay attention to four items: gender, color, art elegances, injury, and exquisiteness of the cover. The criterion for classification of the covers is their art nature and gender. 15th century AD (9th century AH) was the period of the binding art development in which the most beautiful covers were produced by the so-called method of 'burning'. At 16th century AD (10th century AH), in Safavid era, art changed completely and a fundamental evolution occurred in the technique and method of binding. The greatest change in this art was the extensive use of stamp that was made mostly of steel and copper. These stamps were presses against leather. These covers were called 'beat'. In this paper, writing and bookbinding of about 32 Shahnamehs of Safavid era available in the Iranian libraries and museums are studied. An analytical-statistical study shows that four methods have been used including beat, burning, mosaic, and oily. 69 percent of the covers of these copies are cardboards with a leathery coating (goatskin) and have been produced by burning and beat methods. Its reasons are that these two methods have been common methods in Safavid era and performing them was only feasible on leather and the most desirable and commonly used leather of that time was goatskin which was the best option for cover legend durability and preserving the book and it was more durable because it had been made of goat skin. In addition, it had prepared a suitable opportunity for the binding artist's creativity and innovation.

Keywords : Shahnameh, Safavid era, bookbinding, beat cover, burning cover

Conference Title : ICAHSS 2015 : International Conference on Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : October 05-06, 2015