The Private Library

H. G. Dixey Press

Henry Morris on Making Paper

Early Japanese Bookbinding

Vol 6 : 2 April 1965
EARLY JAPANESE BOOKBINDING by Rigby Graham

In 1959 the Dryad Press published a booklet, Unsew Binding, by George Percival and me—the result of five years of research and experiment. It was felt at the time that this method of binding was particularly suitable for certain types of books where traditional sewn methods had for one reason or another not been entirely satisfactory: magazines consisting of thick sections, the rebinding of hefty reference books and particularly for the binding of single and folded sheets—letters, theses and authors' MSS. No special claim was made that this method was final nor that this slim booklet was the definitive work on the subject. It was merely a beginning—and came out at a time when an increasing number of books were being produced in single or folio sheets, and a number of these had come to us for rebinding.

As a result of research into different methods of attaching sheets to one another—by sticking, stapling, side-stitching, overcasting, punching and drilling—both at present and in the past, very many interesting and different ways in which this problem had been tackled came to light. Malay, Burmese, Chinese and Japanese all have whole developments of their own which in many instances anticipate some of our methods. All early forms of books were unsewn, the stitching or side-stabbing came later. We in the west eventually came to use wire-stitching, or side-stabbing as a fast method for cheap work. One of the many disadvantages of this is that the staples (unless they are made of galvanised wire) invariably rust and mark the paper. Eastern people quite early on used twists of paper and books were often sewn or side stabbed with this (plate a and b). How much more sensible and consistent, to hold paper together with paper rather than introducing so foreign and unsympathetic a material as wire.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century in England it was customary for books to be sold stab-stitched (with thread) in thin paper wrappers (or sometimes without) and the purchaser took this to the binder of his choice and had it bound. The pierced holes remain—as evidence of this practice. In the illustration plate 1 is a detail of a fifteenth century Chinese phonetic dictionary—evidence of an earlier though similar practice in the East. Not only do the holes remain but so also does the stab-stitching or 'stapling' which is made of thin paper tightly rolled.

In many instances these methods have, as far as I can ascertain, rarely been explored or documented. In only a few instances has anything been written in English. Most books available in English deal understandably enough with western styles only and rarely do they even mention eastern variants. This article deals only with eastern binding methods and from a Japanese viewpoint. Malay, Burmese, Indian and Tibetan manuscripts and books tell a different though equally fascinating story of development. In certain instances the Japanese methods are similar to, or the same as, or derive from, the Chinese or other styles, but the classical Japanese terminology of binding is so confused that one has to be extremely careful in interpreting the different names. Each style mentioned here has other or alternative names (sometimes several) and some of these names are sometimes applied to other styles.

Kansu or Kansu-bou—Scrolls
The oldest and earliest form of Japanese book was the scroll—a long sheet of inscribed paper rolled round a central former or roller (figs 2, 3, 4). At the beginning and end of the text there was usually a lead and a tail portion, usually reinforced in some way with strong paper or cloth and frequently beautifully ornamented. The roller was usually made of wood and sometimes had endpieces of ivory, horn, stone or metal. Often the roller would be in two pieces (fig. 1) and these pieces were usually available ready-made in different lengths, and one pair of suitable size could be selected according to the size of the paper. This Kansu style prevailed in Japan in the seventh and eighth centuries but also naturally enough lingered on for a considerable time afterwards. In Japan as in China or other parts of the east once a method has been proved to be satisfactory it can remain unchanged for a very long time.

KANSU SCROLL

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**Orihon—Folded Book**

Orihon, which means literally ‘folded book’, was in Japan as elsewhere the direct development from the scroll (fig. 5). It was made by folding the scroll zig zag fashion into a convenient size and discarding the central roller. The lead and tail portions were naturally converted into covers. Only one side of the paper was written on. This Orihon it is believed originated in China, where it dates back to the eighth century (T'ang Dynasty). It is still the most frequently seen in copy books of calligraphy in Japan. Today, where this method is used, both sides of the zig zag are often printed or written on, either thicker paper is used—towards the show through—or frequently two sheets are pasted back to back.

**Sempu-yo (Wind-blown leaves) lit. leaves blown up by the wind**

This was the next stage in development and was practically the same as Orihon except that the cover front and back was of one single sheet or connected sheets of paper. This brought the development a stage nearer the modern codex form but it had the defect which gave it its lovely and poetic name, of the text being blown upwards and outwards if exposed to, or caught by, a strong wind (figs. 6 and 7). In some instances this rather lovely defect of the Sempu-yo was overcome by pasting the folds of the paper together to hold them in place (figs. 8 and 9). The existing specimens of Sempu-yo are extremely rare.

**Detcho (Pasted Leaves) or Kocho-so (Butterfly style)**

This was a new style devised outside the scroll development. In this Detcho style sheets of paper were for the first time not joined together to form a long scroll or zig zag. Each sheet of paper with text upon it was folded so that the writing was inside. A number of these folded sheets were pasted together along the folds to form what is today used
in one method of unsewn binding (figs. 10, 11, 12). The covers were added subsequently. With books of this style the reader turned over two leaves (four pages) at a time as two pages of text were naturally followed by two blank pages alternately. In this opened position the leaves would easily flutter like the wings of a butterfly—hence its name. This style developed in China during the Sung Dynasty—tenth to eleventh centuries. Some time later, in Japan, thicker paper was introduced and this made printing or writing on both sides of the paper possible. It was at this point, in appearance at least, the form of the modern book was achieved, with text on every page.

_Yamato-toji (Japanese binding)_

Until this stage was reached, no thread, string or other sewing material had been used. It was this Yamato-toji style which introduced stitching. This is one of those examples where alternative names are frequently used. It is often called and rather misleadingly, Kocho-so (Butterfly Style) and different scholars have suggested other names for it. This style developed in Japan in the eleventh or early twelfth century. A number of folded sheets were collated or gathered to form a section. Four holes were pierced along this fold and by means of strings this set of sheets or section was bound with others to complete a book (figs. 13 and 14). Covers were added later. It is interesting and worthwhile to compare this with the excellent description on Coptic sewing on pages 28-29.

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*From top, left to right: plates 1, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d.*
Japanese binding

YAMATO-TOJI

9-11 of Bernard Middleton's *History of English Craft Bookbinding Technique* (London: Hafner, 1963), where he suggests an interesting parallel development originally in Egypt and subsequently elsewhere. The creation in Japan of thicker paper (both sides of which could be printed or written on—this was not possible with the thin Chinese paper) had brought about the development of this form of book-binding. There was now text on every page and it was no longer necessary for the reader to turn over two sheets at a time.

Fukuro-toji (Bag binding)

In the meantime, during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the Chinese had developed the bag binding which became so popular by the end of this period that by far the greater number of old books still in existence in China, Japan and elsewhere are in this style. Until the introduction of western paper and western methods of binding this was the most common way in which books were bound. The name derives from the shape of each folded leaf which suggests a bag, although there is no bottom to it, reminiscent of the old bon-bon type pillow-slip.

This style consists of sheets folded with the written or printed surface outside, bound together at the 'open' end by thread strings going usually through four holes (figs. 15, 16, 17, + plate 2c). The number of string holes was variable and there were often additional holes at the head and tail corners (fig. 18 + plate 2d). This was not merely decoration, it added extra strength at the ends and prevented the thin paper from pulling away. Several volumes are kept in a special case or stiffened wrapper (fig. 19)—and there are many variations. The wrapper is usually secured with clasps or pegs made of horn, ivory, bone or bamboo (fig. 20) or in recent mass produced examples—plastic—rather like the collar stiffeners in shirts. Most examples of Japanese binding are of this Fukuro-toji style. Authentic specimens of the other styles are rare even in Japan. Those examples which do exist however are to be found only in old collections in museums, libraries and temples.


April 1965
MAKING PAPER  by Henry Morris

In the year 1491 a book of civil laws was printed in Venice. The name of the printer was Andrea Torresano, and he did a magnificent job. His work was so well done that when I saw a single leaf of it 465 years later, I suspected it was a fraud. I was a printer also, but had never seen any examples of fifteenth century printing, nor even a sheet of hand made paper. This event marked the beginning of my interest in hand papermaking.

You may feel that I am being overly dramatic in mentioning Mr Torresano. Perhaps. But since this is how it really happened, no one can accuse me of any untruths. Besides it is much more romantic this way. I could have just as easily not seen the advertisement at all, or perhaps some other one, offering ancient Egyptian tablets or Roman coins made into cuff links. So I am sticking to my story, and I insist that Torresano is at least partly responsible.

The advertisement I mention offered these leaves to be used for decorative purposes. As I noted earlier, the workmanship was of such a high degree that I was sure they were some kind of reproductions. The paper was in excellent condition, still very white and apparently with plenty of life left, as it was neither brittle or cracking.

This intrigued me, and I thought it would not be too difficult to make paper as it had been done then, so I decided to try my hand at it. After reading one of Dard Hunter’s books and seeing what a mould looked like, I attempted to build one. The initial try was a failure, but I finally got the general idea and about a month later I had a workable mould.

Regarding moulds, I should make the point that Torresano is at least partly responsible. It is fortunate for me that it was so small, as a larger mould of this type of construction would have required a man of iron to make use of it. I will say thisfor it—barring any unusual acts of violence the thing should last forever.

By this time the fever was upon me. I read more on the subject and became increasingly interested. The business of making pulp was now at hand, and in my ignorance it seemed a very simple thing to do. Using a hammer and anvil, I tried to beat some wet rags into a pulp-like condition. After a few minutes I could see I had a problem. It didn’t work at all. In rapid succession I tried a food blender, electric mixer, and finally an old meat grinder. All these experiments ended in dismal failure. It then came to me that I must have a beater, and upon inquiring as to the cost of a small laboratory model, I found the price too high for my limited budget.

There followed several months during which I managed to build a contraption that I hoped would do the job. At the time, the family finances were rather tight, and I had to smuggle most of the parts past my wife. As I was caught red-handed on a few occasions, I soon became an expert liar. It was also necessary to manipulate the funds a little. I felt terribly guilty, but as Mr Mason says, “to make paper you must be a dedicated man.” The first fiber I used was cotton linters which I purchased from a mattress company. The linters were very coarse, full of cottonseeds and were almost impossible to handle in my machine. I did manage to make a few sheets from this pulp, but they were unsatisfactory. The next try was made with rag “half-stuff” which is fiber that has been cleaned and broken. This was quite successful and I am still using this type of material.

It was a thrill to see my first sheet of paper, and I plunged enthusiastically forward, only to discover that I could not get the newly made sheets to properly “couch” or transfer onto the felts. In desperation I wrote to the English papermaking concern of J. Barcham Green for help. As it turned out, Mr Green proved to be my salvation. Through countless letters he advised me, helping in so many ways that I will never cease to be grateful. Later on, his son Rémy also gave freely of his help and advice, and when he came to the States on a trip I had the pleasure of meeting him. Looking back over the voluminous correspondence I wonder how many would take such time and trouble to help a total stranger, with no thought of personal gain. I think the answer is that most paper men have a great love for their craft and are glad to help anyone who is seriously interested. Some of the comments in the correspondence will, I think also show that they both have a good sense of humour. J. Barcham Green, in being questioned on how to get hand made paper to dry flat, had this to say: "If you can tell us how to loaf dry hand made paper without cockling, we would be very pleased to give you something really worthwhile. We have been at it for 150 years, and have not found out
And later, Remy Green in reply to a query about the proper consistency of the pulp in the vat:

"Although my father will write to you about the points you raise, I could not help laughing about your last question regarding the thickness of the pulp. It is rather like asking 'How long is a piece of string?' For the moment I cannot think of any description that would help at all. You write about 'as heavy as thick cream' but even in this little country in two neighboring counties there are two well known kinds of cream, both coming under the category of 'thick', but one is really thick and lumpy and can be carved into shapes and does not run at all, and the other is like liquid cement; so it depends on if you are talking about Devonshire or Cornish, and I am going to leave this fearful problem for my father to answer."

More months went by, and having accumulated a store of paper, I began to wonder what I should do with it. I then decided to try printing on some of my paper. A trip to the library turned up a copy of Mary Kettiby's Receipts in Cookery, an 18th century book of recipes and home remedies. I copied enough to make a forty page booklet, bought a supply of Caslon Old Face, and proceeded with my initial attempt which was completed in 1958.

The only press available to me at the time was a small automatic cylinder, and although the paper was not flat, it went off with very little trouble. Most of the paper used on this first project was made on my original mould. Paper enthusiasts may note the peculiar construction of the chain wires. This is a single wire wrapped around the laid wire and a heavier supporting wire, which is underneath the laid wires. At the time it seemed to be a logical method.

Next came the construction of a larger mould with very heavy laid marks, and watermarks of a bird and a bull. I liked the texture of this sheet, but later discovered it was difficult to print upon due to the rough surface. The choice of the watermark devices was arbitrary—they just seemed to go well with the sheet. Later on when I had to pick a name for my Press the existing marks suggested "Bird & Bull Press." I have been asked about the origin of the name, so I hope this will answer the question.

All along I had been having many problems with sizing my paper, and at this point I decided to tackle the problem with scientific instruments. Mr Green gave me the proper specific gravity readings of the sizing gelatine, and armed with a Twaddell hydrometer and a note-book, I tried to test my sizing gelatine. For reasons which I never discovered, I could not get any sort of intelligent readings. This noble experiment ended abruptly when the hydrometer rolled off the top of the table and was reduced to several irreconcilable pieces. It was really a shame; it was a beautiful thing and it made the whole operation seem so much more scientific. I still have the column that came with it, and although I have no use for it, it is rather impressive-looking to have around when visitors come to inspect the "mill." If hand made paper is left unsized, it is best to print it dry, and it is almost impossible to achieve a good impression if the forme is large or if there are solids in it. When the paper is sized it can be dampened before printing, and in this condition it prints beautifully.

Using my second mould I made enough paper to print Papyrus, which is a poem about the French papermaking industry written in Latin by Father Jean Immerdis in 1693. Papyrus was of special interest to me as it described the entire papermaking process as it was then practised. The edition consisted of 113 copies, and was finished in 1961.

The third book was a collection of three fifteenth century German folk tales entitled Three Erfurt Tales. This was done with the kind co-operation of Lessing Rosenwald, the well-known bibliophile. Mr Rosenwald supplied the original book, arranged to have it translated, and gave much help and advice. 110 copies were finished in 1962.

Papyrus, Erfurt, and the book in which this article originally appeared were printed on a platen press which I set up in my basement along with the other necessities for a small print shop. For the fourth book a new mould was made which has finer laid and chain wires, and produces a reasonably tractable sheet.

Thus my adventures, up to the present at least. Perhaps your interest has been aroused and you would like to try your hand at this ancient craft—wonderful! You will certainly not regret it. The requirements are modest; a little wood, some wood, assorted odds and ends of bolts, nuts, pulleys and other paraphernalia. And above all, an understanding wife; for if yours is not, you will never make paper, my friend.

Reprinted in slightly abridged form with permission from "Five on paper." The original title was "More adventures in papermaking".

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I know little about printing, for... I only kept it up because no one would accept my verses for publication, and I am acutely aware of how badly—except now and then by good fortune—I do it. It was incidentally that I turned to engraving, and realized that it offered a way of satisfying what artistic urge I had.” So wrote, with characteristic modesty, the operator of one of England’s oldest extant private presses.* Nor is this self-deprecation justified, as any fortunate possessor of Giles Dixey’s publications can testify: verse, illustration and typography please.

Harold Giles Dixey, now in his active 70s, was born at Oxford, and educated at the Oxford Preparatory School, at Sherborne and at Hertford College, Oxford. He has seen many parts of the world, having served in the Merchant Service and the Royal Field Artillery before and during the first World War, and in the R.A.F. during the second World War. The richness of Giles Dixey’s classical education and wide travels infuses all his work, and makes it so well worth having and reading.

From 1919 to 1945 (with a break for service in the R.A.F during the second World War) Giles Dixey was an Assistant Master at his old preparatory school (now the Dragon School), and it was during this time, in 1922, that he bought his first press—a wooden octavo flat-bed Adana. At first this was used for school mnemonics, Christmas cards, programmes, and so on. These very early productions were undated, and are now mostly lost.

In 1924, or just before, on a hint from the headmaster Giles Dixey volunteered to start and run a “handicraft” hut. He transferred his press to the hut, but it was not often used by the boys, perhaps because they found that printing required too much accuracy and hard work. From this period dates Syntaxes (1926), which bears the imprint Panurgia (recorded by Elizabeth Lieberman in her register of private-press names), and Twenty-three Sonnets.

A few years later, when he had handed over his responsibility for

* But as G.D. writes “Printing and privacy are incompatible terms; for even if you don’t publish as a tradesman, you are promulgating, if not your subject matter, at least your typographical effect. Why not otherwise be satisfied with unicity?”

Above, and on page 39, wood-engravings by Giles Dixey.

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handicrafts, Giles Dixey took the press home. At this time he produced Retrospect (1930), the third of the little books of verse that his friends look forward to receiving, but the first to carry the "H. G. Dixey" imprint.

What is this Poetry which, we are told,
Outlives tough bronze and rarer is than gold?
She is the Art whereby the Poet's thrill
Throbs in our souls as ours, without our will.

In the early 30s, when the first wooden press broke down, Dixey bought an all-steel Adana octavo flat-bed press. In 1936 and 1937 he worked on a splendid edition of little verses by his father, the late Dr. F. A. Dixey, F.R.S. This, A Posy from the Dust, gave the opportunity for experiment in illustration, with wood-engravings and line-blocks in colours and black. A Posy, with its rubricated initials, was beautifully printed on a hard hand-made or mould-made paper. The second press succumbed to the rough treatment, and Giles Dixey bought his third press, a quarto flat-bed Adana, which he still uses.

A few years later he was given an antique office copying-press, on which he has printed his dry points (for lack of a mangle) and such linocuts as were too big for the Adana. These include a series of annual linocuts by the late Bernard Gotch. Giles Dixey has always experimented with all kinds of media for his illustrations from cork mats to cigarette tins (see for example, the front cover of Simplicities of an Author-Printer (1947), and the Libyan desert scene on page 39 of the same work).

In 1945 Dixey retired from pedagogy, and, in consequence, 1946 was a very productive year with nine publications, eight of them the familiar verse opuscula. My own favourite from about this time, if I may interject a personal note, is the Simplicities, already mentioned. One of the very few books which were sold through booksellers, I picked this up at Blackwells when in Oxford for a conference in December 1947. So started my friendship with the Dixeys, the most loyal and generous of friends.

Giles Dixey's many friends include some authors, and four of them have been printed and published by him: Violet E. Johnson, John Grier (an old seafaring friend), Robert Stark and Doreen Wallace. One of Dixey's uncommon prose works is Cesto Poetae (1949), in which he has gathered and arranged sayings from a number of cherished authors on his own bookshelves.

Every year his friends receive from Giles Dixey a beautifully
designed Christmas card, usually in many colours, and frequently carrying an amusing or cryptic message. In 1963 came another delightful retrospective publication, Proofs of Endeavour, with impressions of many of his illustrations over the years. Most years, too, see the production of a further little book of verse, issued with the modesty which he describes (in the words of five authors) as 'one that one can write only for friends. Yet publication in some degree, and by some mode, is a sine qua non condition for the generation of literature; the existence of one's works in print gives a delusive feeling that they may have been read 'among the men and women the multitude'. The thing is possible; and as a poor poem does not do much harm after all—nobody reads it who is likely to be seriously hurt by it—I would venture myself where I had as much to hope as to fear.

Checklist of books printed by H. G. Dixey

All the books are sewn or stapled into printed wrappers. The figures in parentheses refer to the number of copies in the edition. Except where otherwise indicated the author is Giles Dixey.

1926 Syntaxes, pp. 16 (Panurgia) (c. 30)
   The Dancing Leaf by Violet E. Johnson, pp. ii + 26 (c. 30)
   Twenty-three Sonnets, pp. iv + 24 (70)
1930 Winter Sunshine, il. 27 (printed on one side only) (53)
1932 Retrospect, pp. 48 (60)
1934 Versions and Afterthoughts, pp. x + 54 (100)
1937 A Posy from the Dust by F.A.D., pp. x + 42 (55)
1946 The Golden Verses of Panurgia, pp. vi + 8 (53)
   The Way of a Ship according to Apollonius Rhodius, pp. viii + 10 (60)
   The Temple Stair, pp. 32 (78)
   Sonnets from the Levant, pp. 16 (80)
   Sonnets from the Western Desert, pp. 16 (83)
   Sonnets from Lybian Tripoli, pp. 16 (83)
   Hymns without Faith, pp. 16 (83)
   Sonnets in Sand, pp. 16 (83)
   Catalogue 1946, pp. 8 (c. 80)
1947 Ourselves a Dream, pp. 24 (83)
   Postscripts, pp. 28 (85)
   Schoolroom Echoes, pp. 24 (93)
   Simplicities of an Author-Printer, pp. 40 (200)
   A Note on the "Norman Court", by John Grier, pp. vi + 8 (73)

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RECENT PRIVATE PRESS BOOKS

A momento of the quater-centenary year of William Shakespeare, 1564-1964. (15 pp., 10 × 8 inches, quarter vellum with paper boards, 200 copies, price £2 10s. Stanbrook Abbey Press, Stanbrook Abbey, Callow, Worcester, England.) The text, lines from The Merchant of Venice, and Sonnet CXVI, is perhaps rather too slight to make a book as large as this. Nevertheless, the printing itself is very fine, as would be expected, and there are two hand-drawn initials by Margaret Adams, one in burnished gold, the other in blue. The binding was carried out at the Abbey: the boards are covered in decorated blue and white paper by the Takumi artists of Tokio.


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Dear garment, six poems by Charles Maurras, and one by Charles d'Orléans, translated by Count Potocki of Montalk. (15 pp., 8 x 4 3/4 inches, cloth boards, 150 copies, price 10s. Mélissa Press, Lovelace’s Copse, Plush, Dorchester, Dorset, England.) These new translations read as well as Count Potocki’s earlier ones, first printed in the Right Review and later issued in book form as Music within me, which were much praised by Maurras himself. A well laid title-page, though the poems themselves could sometimes have been better placed; reasonable presswork. Bound by the printer/translator in pink cloth boards printed in green.

Peppercorn papers, by Claude A. Prance. (174 pp., 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches, bound in Fabroleen covered boards, price £2 2s. Golden Head Press, 26 Abbey Road, Cambridge, England.) Pleasant essays on books and book collecting, with some emphasis on the London Magazine 1820–9, and Charles Lamb, and with a useful list of Richard Garnett’s writings. Printed by the Bristol Typesetting Co.

Prisoners-of-war work, 1756–1815, by Jane Toller. (31 pp. + 13 half-tone illustrations, 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches, quarter bound in maroon cloth and paper boards, price £1 10s. Golden Head Press, 26 Abbey Road, Cambridge, England.) The first book in English to deal with the work of the French and Dutch prisoners in this country: work in straw, bone, wood, cut-paper, etc., sold at markets established in the prisons.

D.J.C.

The name of John Roberts Press is well known to collectors of fine editions and privately printed books. Their productions range from the twenty-guinea magnificence of a folio ‘Song of Songs’ to the more modest charm of ‘Twelve by Eight’, recently published by the Private Libraries Association.

Many bibliophiles cause small books to be privately printed, so to clothe some favoured item in worthy typographical dress. They may cost little more than a good Christmas card — though there is, of course, no limit at the opposite end of the scale.

Those contemplating the production of a book or booklet ‘printed for their friends’ may expect interested cooperation from John Roberts Press Ltd, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1.