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BOOKBINDINGS AND THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK

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Stručni rad

The traditional book manifests itself in a physical form which is subject to the circumstances of its creation and its subsequent history. The bookbinder is part of that history, occupying the place between the creation of the physical text and its consumption by its readers, whether they are members of the elite or at the lowest end of the economic spectrum. The work of the binder will therefore reflect both the economic and cultural circumstances of the creation of all books and when and where they were made, through variations in the techniques and materials used to make each binding. A close analysis of bindings will therefore cast light on the history of each book and the history of the book and the booktrade in general. The use of sewn bookblocks without cover or boards as a means of presenting books for sale and of limp covers in paper as early as the second decade of the sixteenth century both reveal the economic workings of the booktrade and how people bought their books. The presence on a single binding of the evidence of different cultural influences and national practices can reveal the cosmopolitan nature of the booktrade, just as details of the way in which a book was bound can reveal how individual owners regarded their books. They are essential components of the history of the book, and should be preserved so that they can play their part in the revealing the archaeology of the book.

Key words: *binding, booktrade, historic bindings, history of the book*

Now that we no longer have to have a codex-form book in front of us to read a book, it is perhaps time to reflect on the values that we might or might not attach to the material object that some of us, at least, still call the 'book'. Traditionally those values can be quite contradictory, as we can be encouraged both to value the text of a book at the expense of its material manifestation – there has long been a suspicion of those who take an interest in the material object, as if this is somehow demeans the value of the text within a book - whilst at the same time most of us have a deeply-rooted

revulsion at the idea of destroying a physical book, as if the act of destroying it actually threatens the survival of the text itself as an independent entity. As biblioclasts the world over have learnt, especially since the invention of printing, it is very hard to destroy a text that exists in many copies.

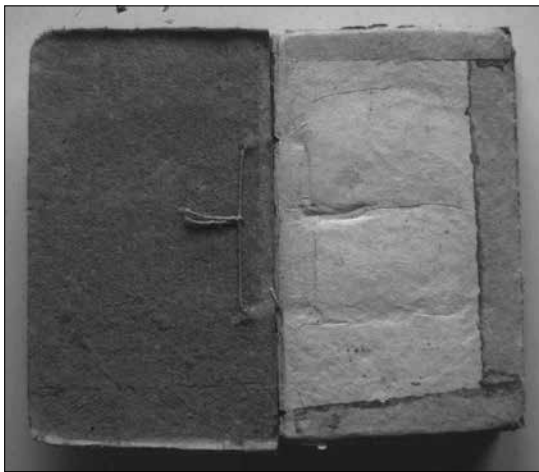
Until quite recently, the written – or printed – word has required a substrate and where that substrate is parchment or paper and is folded into a codex, it requires some sort of mechanism to hold those sheets together, and in the right order, so that they may be read conveniently and protected from damage. That mechanism is what we call a binding, and like all man-made objects, of whatever type it may be, it requires first to be put together, and that in turn requires a number of things: firstly the materials – paper, thread, textile, wooden or paper boards, animal skins of several different types and preparations, perhaps gold leaf for decoration, metal for clasps and furniture, and so on – all of which will have been prepared in a variety of ways and some of which may be recycled from earlier use. Secondly, there must be a place where it was made, revealed in many cases by the manner in which it was made, and thirdly, one or more craftsmen will be needed to make it. In addition, it will also require the other half of the commercial equation, that is, the person or institution that pays for it, be that a bookseller, a library or a private individual. And this, of course, is just the beginning of the history of a book. Over the years it will accumulate that history – it may be heavily used and have to be repaired, it may be scarcely touched and preserve its pristine early state, perhaps even unopened, it may remain in a single institutional library all its life, quite possibly with a succession of shelfmarks as it has been moved around as that library developed and grew, or it may have belonged to a succession of owners, each of whom may leave his or her mark on it, and whose status and taste may be displayed in additional tooling or in a new binding. There may be marginal notes and underlinings and notes on the flyleaves, showing how the book was read and used, and all of this, the paratext as it is sometimes called today, depends upon the physical object, which is at the same time its carrier and its witness and much, if not most, of it will be found in or on its binding.

For all their low economic status within the booktrade, the makers of those bindings, the bookbinders, occupied a very significant place within it, as their work stood between that of the producer of text, either scribe or printer, and the consumer of text, be that a private individual or an institutional library. The choice of the binding, and above all its cost, might have been the responsibility of one or the other, or be the result of either a tacit or an expressed understanding of what the customer might want, but however the choice was made, it must reflect on one or other side of the equation, if not both. This gives bookbindings great potential as important interpretative tools in assessing the status, function and location of use of any bound book.

The exploration of what we can learn from bindings is not restricted to grand books bound for members of the European elite, even though these are the books that have dominated the literature of binding for the last century and a half, but can include very modest types of book. An example of such books would be the French school

books of the nineteenth century which are distinguished by a particular type of knot. These modest volumes, produced most probably in numbers that might make even the most famous novelists a little envious, appeared in a variety of different coverings over more than a century, as external fashions came and went, but inside they share one small secret – a simple and rapid method of board attachment by which the slips of the two thin cords on which the smaller format examples were sewn, or multiple pairs of cords for larger format books, were brought through single holes and knotted together on the inside of the boards (Fig. 1). This technique was used from the early years of the nineteenth century and it is remarkably consistent, and is, so far as I have been able to see, only found on French schoolbooks. It is not that all French school books used this technique (there are many that do not), but that all examples of it that I have so far found are on French schoolbooks printed over a period of at least 110 years – a period that saw a quite remarkable transformation of the booktrade with the industrialisation and mechanisation of both printing and bookbinding and through which this particular technique survived from decade to decade without change. The most recent example known to me, in a binding with the date 1923 on the cover, turns out to have been used on an edition actually printed in 1929,¹ but still using an earlier printed side-covering. That it was printed in the modest Breton town of Vannes may also tell us something of the slow take-up of the new technologies in provincial centres, and the economics and indeed survival of local book production. For the limited numbers of school

books required in such a place, it would not, perhaps, have been economical to invest in the new machinery then available in the major centres of book production, and this allowed the old techniques to survive. The book also shows how a technique can become so embedded within a particular genre of publication that it survives for far longer than we might ever expect. Such an example shows that simple, often very plain, bindings have within them the potential to tell interesting stories which in turn can contribute to our understanding of the booktrade and the making of books.



*Figure 1. A copy of *Iliade d'Homère*, Paris, 1825, showing the two cord sewing supports slips knotted together inside the left board (Private collection)*

¹ *Secondes Lectures. L'écolier modèle - Ouvrage faisant suite à la méthode de lecture par une Commission de Professeurs*. Vannes : Lafolye et J. de Lamarzelle, 1929.

The lacing-on of boards is in fact one of the areas where national and personal styles of binding are often most clearly revealed. There is, for instance, a particular pattern of lacing in which twisted cord sewing supports were untwisted before being laced through two holes arranged at right-angles to the spine edge of each board before being laced back through a third hole placed further from the spine edges of the boards and slightly below the other two holes in the left board and above in the right and cut off to leave about 4 mm of the slip pasted to the inside of the board (Fig. 2). This technique appears to be unique to a single workshop, that of Vincent Williamson of Eton, and possibly to one individual in that workshop who was probably not Vincent Williamson himself, as the technique continued in use for fifteen years after Williamson disappeared from the records of Eton College, for which he worked. The use of three holes through which to lace each slip is also unusual in English practice, so much so, that an example² in which the slips are tucked under themselves on the inside of the board is so distinctively French as a technique, that although undoubtedly bound in London, it must, I believe, have been the work of an immigrant French binder working in London – and there is good archival evidence that there were French binders working in London at this time (Fig. 3).



Figure 2. The three-hole board-lacing technique used in the workshop of Vincent Williamson of Eton in the early seventeenth century



*Figure 3. The holes lacing with the slips tucked under themselves on the inside of the boards of a London binding (Eobanus Hess, *Psalterium Davidis carmine redditum per Eobanum Hessum*, London: Excudebat Thomas Vautrollerius Typographus, 1575 (Perne Library, Peterhouse, University of Cambridge))*

² Eobanus Hess. *Psalterium Davidis carmine redditum per Eobanum Hessum*. London : Excudebat Thomas Vautrollerius Typographus, 1575. [Perne Library, Peterhouse, Cambridge, I.8.28].

It is possible for a structural detail of a binding to give tangible evidence of a significant political event, though at first sight the connection between the Duke of Alva (the Spanish Governor of the Netherlands, from 1567-73) and a stuck-on endband may not appear too obvious (Fig.4a & b).³ The connection comes from the fact that the endband is almost certainly the work of a protestant refugee from the Spanish Netherlands in the 1570s, fleeing the persecution of the protestants led by the Duke of Alva. The stuck-on endband did not form part of the English tradition of bookbinding until the nineteenth century, whereas it was the usual endband for books bound in boards in the Low Countries, and in the 1570s there was an influx of protestant refugees into England, a protestant country, from the southern Netherlands. This means that the binding on which this particular endband is found, which can be placed in London on the evidence of the tooling on the cover, can be quite confidently ascribed to an immigrant from the southern Netherlands and offer a small indication of the movement of people in response to international political events.

Figure 4. A London binding of the 1570s on a copy of: Jean Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Prælectiones in dvodecim prophetas (quos vocant) minores*, Geneva: Apud Ioannem Crispinum, 1567 (Great Yarmouth Parish Library, now in Norwich Cathedral Library)



Figure 4a. woodcut portrait of the Duke of Alva. b.



Figure 4b. a stuck-on endband with a lining of medieval manuscript waste and a secondary sewing with a front bead

³ Jean Calvin. *Ioannis Calvini Prælectiones in dvodecim prophetas (quos vocant) minores*. Geneva : Apud Ioannem Crispinum, 1567. [Great Yarmouth Parish Library, sada u Norwich Cathedral Library].

What this analysis of details of some of the structural elements of bindings shows is that book structures can be 'read' in ways that allow us to gain a greater and more sophisticated understanding of how the booktrade and the acquisition of books worked; ways that are, in most cases, not going to be found in the written record. One of the reasons for this is that the binders of ordinary books were usually the least regarded of the makers of books, and certainly the least well paid, and, unless they were fortunate enough to serve the wealthy elites of Europe, are likely to remain stubbornly anonymous. But these unsung heroes of the sewing frame and beating hammer bound countless millions of books between the mid-fifteenth and the early nineteenth century. If this sounds an exaggeration, we must always remember that the books that we are used to seeing in rare book collections in libraries are, generally speaking, only a small and rather rarefied selection of what was printed, as the almanacs, the cheap devotional literature, the popular play texts and romances and an unending and constantly growing stream of technical manuals, guidebooks, maps of all sorts, schoolbooks and other more or less ephemeral material has largely disappeared, though all of it had to be bound, often in editions that numbered well into the thousands, and yet of which we have at best small handfuls of surviving examples and in some cases none at all. And this is to say nothing of the stationery binding trade, the 'parchment binders' as they were called in England, making account books, ledgers, logbooks, memorandum books and notebooks of all sorts and sizes.

We can, however, be sure of one thing, that all printed books began in pretty much the same way, as printed sheets, folded into bunches of 10-12 sheets at a time and folded once and pressed or beaten to compact them and make them easier to handle for shipping. The binder's job was to separate them, fold them into gatherings, arrange them in the right order and then to bind them in whatever way his client demanded of him. We know that books could be sold in sheets, and they undoubtedly were within the trade, and, to an extent that is the subject of some debate, to individual customers. Sir Richard Ellys, a wealthy scholar of the first half of the eighteenth century with a huge library, certainly bought some of his books in sheets as they have remained unbound (Fig. 5), but he also bought books in another format altogether. These include two Amsterdam editions that were sold to him as sewn bookblocks,⁴ with neither boards nor covers, through the London booktrade, and the endleaf construction is of a type that indicates that they were sewn in the Netherlands, presumably in Amsterdam (Fig. 6). He probably bought them shortly before his death in 1742, as they were wrapped in English printed waste of 1737, leaving him, perhaps, no time to have them bound. Had he done so, the covers and decoration of the resulting bindings would have been English and the bindings as a whole would have been thought of as English, hiding the fact that they started life in another country.

⁴ Jean le Clerc. *Histoire des Provinces Unies de Pays Bas*. Amsterdam : chez l'Honoré & Châtelain, 1723. [National Trust, Blickling Hall] and Jean le Clerc. *Explication historique des principales Medailles Frapées pour servir à l'Histoire des Provinces Unies des Pays Bas*. Amsterdam : chez l'Honoré & Châtelain, 1723. [National Trust, Blickling Hall]



Figure 5. A book in unbound sheets (John Taylor, *The Hebrew Concordance, adapted to the English Bible and disposed of in The Manner of Buxtorf*, London, 1757, vol. II (The National Trust, Blickling Hall Library))



Figure 6. Two sewn bookblocks sewn for sale with uncut edges and without either boards or covers (Jean le Clerc, *Histoire des Provinces Unies de Pays Bas*, Amsterdam: chez l'Honoré & Châtelain, 1723 and Jean le Clerc, *Explication historique des principales Medailles Frapées pour servir à l'Histoire des Provinces Unies des Pays Bas*, Amsterdam: chez l'Honoré & Châtelain, 1723 (National Trust, Blickling Hall))

In fact the binder in the Netherlands who sewed the books also made a pre-emptive decision to add marbled endleaves to the textblocks, so even had the bindings been finished in England for Ellys, the choice of marbled paper would not have been that of Ellys or his binder. This certainly complicates any attempt to understand the levels of expense at which binders typically used marbled papers in their bindings, and whether this was a decision made in consultation with the owner of the book or according to some now lost code of practice. In this case, the only clue that we would

have of this practice, given that English binders would almost certainly have been using marbled papers imported from the Low Countries or their own work, lies in the construction of the endleaves, which follows a pattern familiar in the Netherlands and not at all familiar in England. The cord sewing-support slips on both volumes were dressed with some sort of paste or size to stop them untwisting, a clear sign that whoever sewed these books intended that their construction should be stopped at this point, but be left ready for completion at a later date. For an English bookseller importing these books, these would have had the added advantages both of not having to pay for the shipping of the bindings (4 thick folio millboards and their covering leather) and of their not being taxed as bound books.⁵

Almost a hundred surviving examples of such sewn bookblocks have now been recorded, to which some thirty examples of books which were bound in boards and never covered can now be added. It seems to me perfectly clear that this was an established practice in the booktrade over a period of approximately three hundred and fifty years, and that these examples, which have survived by accident, exist in sufficient numbers – a handful might be aberrations – to be representative of possibly a very large number of books sold this way for which we have as yet next to no published documentary evidence. Other examples will undoubtedly exist in ones and twos in libraries scattered across the world.

These books are all distinguishable from books that have simply lost their covers by the absence of marks or stains from turn-ins on the insides of the boards or, perhaps, by the presence of contemporary manuscript annotations made close to the edge of the inside of a board that would have been hidden by a turn-in, had there been any. I believe that these books have two important implications for rare book collections. Firstly that potentially very significant evidence about the sale of the books in the era of the handpress can be found only in the survival of the small, but significant, number of examples of these bindings that still exist. In all the cases that I have so far seen, however, these bindings are not even described in library catalogues, let alone described in a manner that would allow them to be retrieved from a search in those catalogues. Secondly, the evidence that allows them to be identified depends on their being left as they are. I have once or twice been asked whether they should not be completed, and the answer to that question should, of course, be a very decided no! You might think that such a warning would not be necessary, but it is only thirty years ago, in 1984, that the earliest surviving intact bound codex in the world, the fourth-century Mudil Psalter, was cut apart by the director of the Coptic Museum in Cairo with a pair of scissors, with no record kept of its structure and apparently no photographs taken either.

Bindings that have been subsequently finished after having been bought in an unfinished state are inevitably not so easy to identify, but they do explain one

⁵ This tax was imposed in 1534 in order to protect the work of English bookbinders.

phenomenon that has been recorded, that of instructions to the binder written on the flyleaves of the book that he has bound. How can this be? The binding cannot exist until a binder has made it, so how could an owner write instructions to the binder on its flyleaves? A set of volumes containing a collection of editions mostly of Aristotle, and all printed in Lyon for the same bookseller by the same printer in and around 1530 and in contemporary Italian bindings, and now in the Biblioteca Comunale in the Umbrian town of Terni, have on their flyleaves instructions from presumably the first owner asking for the application of different colours to the edges of the bookblocks to indicate the different texts in each volume. The endleaves at each end of one volume⁶ have either 'biancho' or 'gialdo' written on them, indicating white and yellow edges (another⁷ has the words 'azzurlo' and 'verde' on the flyleaves). If we assume that an owner commissioned these bindings from scratch, we have to ask how he could have written the instructions to the binder on the flyleaves of a book that had not yet been bound? If, however, he bought these composite volumes from a bookseller in the form of sewn bookblocks, with or without boards, there would have been endleaves available for this purpose.

We can be sure that the bookblocks had endbands before the books were completed, because it can clearly be seen that the edge-colouring does not go under the cores of the endbands. In one of the other volumes, however, the front beads of the secondary sewing of the endbands in coloured silk lies over the edge colouring, so we can be sure that the colouring does not postdate the completion of the book in boards and leather. By these means it is possible to work out the two-part history of the bindings on these volumes and find evidence therefore for their sale as sewn bookblocks, possibly even sewn for Scipio de Gabiano in Lyon, for whom they were all printed by Jacob Myt, possibly with temporary covers, before they were completed on the orders of their first or an early owner in Italy. This can be worked out in part thanks to the damage sustained by the volumes. Since I saw them in the early 1990s, two of them, sadly those with the colouring instructions in them, have been taken apart, washed, sized and rebound, and effectively destroyed as physical evidence of this process. My rather indifferent photographs are now the only evidence of the books in their original condition. It is a sign of just how easily lost this type of information can be, which is to say, that evidence such as this requires the libraries which have these books to look at their stock of early books in an object-oriented manner just as much as in a text-oriented manner, and this, in the new digital world, has some important implications and possibilities to which I shall return.

⁶ Aristoteles. *Libri tres de anima*. Lyon : Scipio de Gabiano by Jacob Myt, 1530. [Biblioteca Comunale di Terni, Cinq. C. 285, I/II] and Aristoteles. *Lib. Metaphysica XII*. Lyon : Scipio de Gabiano by Jacob Myt, 1529. [Biblioteca Comunale di Terni, Cinq. C. 285, I/II].

⁷ Aristoteles. *Lib.iiii. de Celo et mundo*. Lyon : Scipio de Gabiano by Jacob Myt, 1529. [Biblioteca Comunale di Terni, Cinq. C. 286. I/II], A Averrois Cordubensis. *De Substantia orbis*. Lyon: Scipio de Gabiano by Jacob Myt, 1529. [Biblioteca Comunale di Terni, Cinq. C. 286. I/II] and Aristoteles. *Meteorum Libri Quatuor*. Lyon: Scipio de Gabiano by Jacob Myt, 1530. [Biblioteca Comunale di Terni, Cinq. C. 286. I/II].

A book in the Uppsala University Library demonstrates this requirement equally well. It is not a very impressive-looking object, but if you are looking for the rarest of rare books, this binding will be just what you are looking for. The book was printed in Lyon in about 1518⁸ and the binding is what should be described as a laced-case binding in paper, that is to say that has a case-type cover made of a thin laminated paper-board which is attached to a sewn bookblock by lacing the slips of its three sewing supports through holes punched in the cover (Fig. 7). So far, so straightforward – there are many tens of thousands of bindings which follow this general pattern. The problem with this one is twofold – the date of the edition it is protecting and its country of origin.

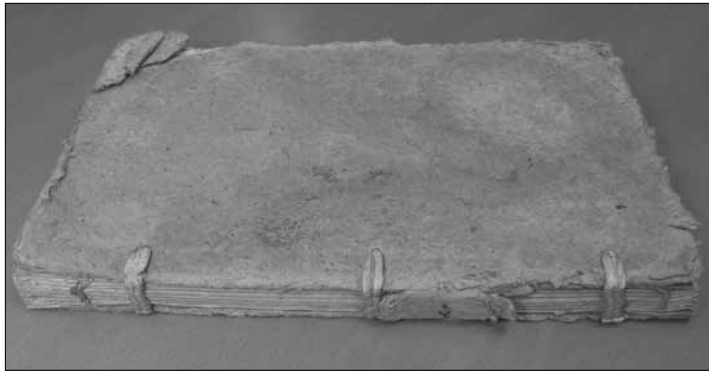


Figure 7. The spine and left side of the cover of: Guy Pape, *Tractatus singulares aurei et in praxi contingibiles domini Guidonis Pape*, Lyon: Simon Vincent, ca 1518 (University Library, Uppsala, Obr 76.137)

The laced-case bindings in cartonnage have been seen as a particularly Italian development, and I have found a significant number of examples bound as early as the 1520s, and one possibly as early as 1518.⁹ The latter originally had a fore-edge envelope flap extending from the right side of the cover across the left side. It has been removed, but someone had traced the profile of a now lost fore-edge envelope flap coming across the fore-edge from the right cover, providing evidence that it originally had such a flap. It is, however, the split-strap alum-tawed sewing supports laced through slots cut in the cover that indicate that it is Italian. This is the archetypal sewing support of late medieval Italian practice and one not found in France, where

⁸ Guy Pape. *Tractatus singulares aurei et in praxi contingibiles domini Guidonis Pape*. Lyon: Simon Vincent, ca 1518. [University Library, Uppsala, Obr 76.137].

⁹ Marsilio Ficino. *De christiana religione: aureum opusculum: post omnes impressiones ubiq[ue] locoru[m] excussas: a bene docto theologo adamussim recognitum: cunctisq[ue] mendis expurgatum*. Venice, 1518. [Biblioteca Seminario Teologico, Gorizia, 4.u.14].)

a thinner and softer, white, tawed skin, often stained on the fleshside, was typically used to make sewing supports at this date, and these are the sewing supports found on the Lyon edition. In addition, the sewing on the split, double supports is linked, creating a shallow chevron pattern of threads across the spine, a type of sewing very common in France and quite unusual in Italy at this period.

The manufacture of the cover is also significant, as this is not the thick single-thickness cartonnage used by Italian binders, but a thin couched laminate (millboard)¹⁰ made from laminations of freshly couched sheets of paper of a sort used by French binders as book boards from the very end of fifteenth century. It all seems to point to France, but there is no record any binding of this type being made there until the seventeenth century, and then with very different materials. The final piece in the jigsaw is the name of the first owner, who has left the inscription *Daignes et amicomum*. This is Jacobus Aignes, about whom nothing much is yet known, except that he was French, he owned books in the early sixteenth century which included several incunables as well as early sixteenth-century books. However, his inscription, which was written on the left flyleaf and therefore on a leaf supplied by the binder, allows us to place the book and its binding very convincingly in France.

It is also worth pointing out that the identification of the cover as a case (a single component which covers the spine and both sides of the bookblock)¹¹ depends on the survival of a fragile, narrow bridge of millboard just above the central sewing support, which is all that survives of the spine. Without this, the sides might easily be mistaken for boards, and the rarity of this binding lost. The most probable explanation of this type of binding is that it was made to protect books as they went through the booktrade to their first customers. It would have been perfectly possible for such an owner to have had the cover removed, boards added and a full leather binding completed without resewing the book.

I think we can therefore conclude that this is a French version of what seems to have been a new development in Italian binding in and around 1518. That it should be on a Lyon edition, and quite possibly therefore bound in Lyon, should come as no surprise, as members of the famous Italian bookselling dynasties of the Giunta, Portonariis and Gabiano were working in Lyon at this time, and what was current in Italy would have been known very quickly in Lyon, and in this case apparently imitated by a French binder, because it is clearly not Italian work.

Evidence for Italian influence in other types of Lyonnais binding is not hard to come by and offers an interesting picture of the book-making culture in the city at this time. A very ordinary-looking laced-case parchment binding of the mid-century

¹⁰ *Definition of acouched laminate board*. URL: <http://w3id.org/lob/concept/1264>.

¹¹ *Definition of cases*. URL: <http://w3id.org/lob/concept/1242>.

on a Lyon edition¹² seen in a Lyonnais bookshop and with no evidence that it had ever left Lyon, and was therefore almost certainly bound in Lyon, shows a very interesting mixture of techniques and practices, both Italian and French. First of all the immediate appearance – the parchment has been reversed, showing what would have been the creamy-white fleshside on the outside of the cover, which is still clearly visible on the turn-ins, and the toned hairside of the skin on the inside. This is a very Italian characteristic, indicating presumably a customer preference for bindings with a plain white exterior. The alum-tawed ties are laced through three holes in the cover in a complex pattern, which is again typical of Italian practice (Fig. 8a).

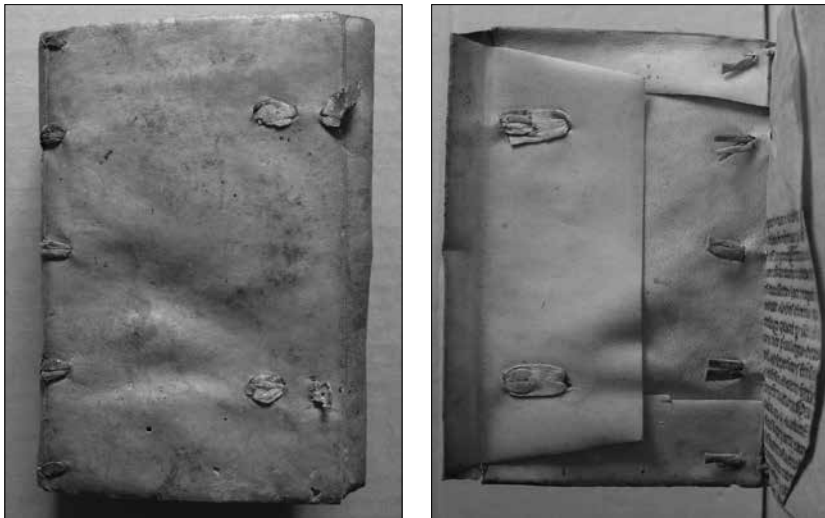


Figure 8. The laced-case parchment binding (*Pandectarvm iris civilis pars quinta: quae de testamentis appellatur*, Lyon: *Apud Gulielmum Rouillium*, 1550 (Private collection))

- a. The exterior of the left cover
- b. The interior of the left cover

So far so Italian, and when I first saw this binding, that is what I assumed it was. However a closer examination changes that impression. The book was sewn on three relatively thin double alum-tawed supports with a linked sewing technique, which is much more likely to be French than Italian, and the endbands were worked with a primary sewing in blue and toned natural-coloured thread with a front bead over twisted alum-tawed cores. An Italian endband of this period would have had a primary sewing in plain thread without a front bead. Finally, the endleaves consist of a sewn single-fold of white handmade laid paper within a loose guard of medieval

¹² *Pandectarvm iris civilis pars quinta: quae de testamentis appellatur*. Lyon : *Apud Gulielmum Rouillium*, 1550. [Private collection]

manuscript waste (of a northern European origins), a type of endleaf that was very common across northern Europe in the sixteenth century and relatively uncommon in Italy.

What the binding presents, therefore, is a French-style structure with an Italian-style cover and from a review of the books in the stacks of the Bibliothèque Municipale in Lyon in 2013, this would appear to be entirely typical of Lyonnais binding. Certainly the citizens of Lyon still see themselves as belonging to the south and not to the north, something perhaps reflected in their use of the traditional roman tiles on the roofs of their older buildings. Given especially the number of Italians working in the booktrade in Lyon, there is no reason to think that bookbinding would escape this influence. It may therefore be that this combination of characteristics is what we need to identify a Lyonnais laced-case parchment binding, particularly where the absence of any tooled decoration leaves only the structure and materials to give us any indication of provenance. The lesson we need to learn from examples like this is that every detail of a binding can have its story to tell and the preservation (or representation in digitized form) of only its external appearance will not necessarily tell the whole story.

The stacks of the Bibliothèque Municipale in Lyon also produced a rather interesting block-printed wrapper on an edition of a government publication.¹³ Instead of cutting pieces from sheets of block-printed paper (*papiers dominotés*) and pasting title labels to them, as most booksellers would have done at this period, the bookseller responsible for this edition made use of what I call a format-specific wrapper designed for an octavo edition of these dimensions. The wrapper has a printed spine divided into six panels, with a blank panel for a title and the word *TOME* in the panel below it, to be filled in with the appropriate volume number. As this work was published in more than thirty volumes with different section titles, it may be that this wrapper was prepared specifically for this edition. A few years earlier, a bookseller in Orléans made use of a wrapper, the design on which, signed by an engraver called Michelin, was not only format-specific but also copy-specific, with the title printed on the spine, and on the left side of the cover a blank space in which the owner was invited to write his or her name.¹⁴ This edition was published in thirty-six volumes. Both are, I believe, part of a process by which the paper wrapper became a more permanent covering for a book, though at this date such wrappers would still be generally have been thought of as only temporary protection for a book with uncut edges until it was bound 'properly'. There is, however, an earlier history of such format-specific wrappers in France, as two examples from Dijon show, both of which made use of

¹³ *Collection des Décrets de l'Assemblée Nationale*. Rédigés par Ordre de Matière; Avec Notes et Explications. Organisation de France. Lyon : Chez F. Barret, Libraire, 1791. [Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon].

¹⁴ Apostolo Zeno. *Bibliothèque des meilleurs Poètes Italiens*, in 36 Volumes in-8°, proposée par souscription, par M. Couret de Villeneuve, Imprimeur du Roi à Orléans, & Editeur de cette Collection. Poesies Drammatiche di Apostolo Zeno. Tomo Secondo. Six-huitième Volume de la Collection, Orléans : Da'Torchj di L. P. Couret de Villeneuve, Stampatore Regio, 1785. [Bodelian Library, Broxb. 45.13].

printed waste over-printed with a woodblock cut in imitation of a tooled leather cover with raised bands. The earlier one uses waste printed in 1696 by Jean Ressayre, the printer of the edition of Horace within the wrapper (Fig. 9).¹⁵ The other, which is a very close copy of the first, is on a Dijon edition of 1743,¹⁶ would seem to indicate that this might have been a Dijon phenomenon.



Figure 9. The left side of the printed wrapper (*Quinti Horatii Flaccii Odarum Liber I*, Dijon: Jean Ressayre, 1705 (Private collection))

Going back even earlier, there is a format-specific block-printed wrapper that makes use of very finely cut woodblocks on each side on an edition of 1496.¹⁷ In this case the two large woodblocks, one of St George and the Dragon on the left cover and the Holy Monogram on the right, are separated by strips of woodcut decoration of different widths that could be combined to adjust the width of the spine to suit the thickness of any quarto edition that was printed on this size of paper and was to

¹⁵ *Quinti Horatii Flaccii Odarum Liber I*. Dijon : Jean Ressayre, 1705. [Private collection]

¹⁶ Vergilius Maro, Publius. *Georgicon liber quartus*. Dijon : Arnaud-Jean-Baptiste Augé, 1743. [BnF URL: <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb35666105s>. *The cover is of printed waste, dated 1747*.]

¹⁷ *Battista Fregoso. Anteros, sive Tractatus contra amorem*. Milan : Leonardus Pachel, 10 May 1496. [Library of Congress, Rosenwald 313], see also: *Vision of a Collector : The Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection in the Library of Congress*. Washington : Library of Congress, 1991, pp. 335-8 and plate 77.

be covered in this type of wrapper. It shows a Ferrarese bookseller of the late fifteenth century investing in two presumably quite costly woodblocks to decorate books in his shop whilst making sure, by means of the interchangeable spine-spacers, that the blocks could be used on different editions. Even so, there is only a tiny handful of surviving examples of the three versions known of this pair of woodcuts. Earlier still, there is a format-specific block-printed wrapper on an Augsburg edition of 1482, which has the same representation of raised bands across the spine as the Dijon wrappers described above. So few of these wrappers survive, however, that it is hard to know exactly what role they played in the marketing of books, but it most probable that they were used on books offered for sale in the bookseller's shop and provided an inexpensive way of making them look attractive as well as offering at least short-term protection to the textblock.

It is not, I think, too much of a stretch to see from these early examples a continuum of practice within the booktrade to which the nineteenth and twentieth centuries added copy- as well as format-specific wrappers, leading directly to the modern paperback, all sharing, as they do, inexpensive structures which hover on the cusp of what is temporary and what is permanent.

I would like to show one final example of how a binding can open up questions about how owners regarded their books. This large paper Elzevir edition of 1617¹⁸ is in what would appear to be an Italian laced-case binding of reversed hair-sheep parchment (Fig. 10a). There is nothing surprising about this, as Elzevir editions were famed across Europe and had an international market. It has uncut edges, which suggests that this is a temporary binding, as the uncut edge does not appear to have been prized until the invention of paper-making machines in the nineteenth century made it appear more desirable. It does not have endbands, but this is not surprising on a book with uncut edges. What is slightly surprising is the rather clean, good-quality parchment used for the cover, which seems a little at odds with a temporary status. A look inside the cover, however, complicates the story, because inside the parchment cover there is another, primary cover, of cartonnage, the edges of the turn-ins of which project quite visibly beyond the parchment (Fig. 10b). It might be thought therefore that an early Italian owner had the parchment secondary cover added to make it a little more elegant (these laced-case cartonnage bindings were after all known as *legature alla rustica* in Italian). However, the sewing supports are laced through both covers, which means the parchment cannot be a simple addition, and an examination of the sewing reveals that the book was sewn once before, as evidenced by empty sewing holes in the spine folds close to but not the same as the current sewing, and occasional threads surviving from the earlier sewing.

¹⁸ Joannes Meursius. *Atticarum Lectionum Libri VI. Un Quibus Antiquitates plurimae, nunc primum in lucem eruta, proferuntur*. Leioden : Ex Officina Elzeviriana, 1617. [Antiquariaat Brinkman, Amsterdam, seen in 2013].

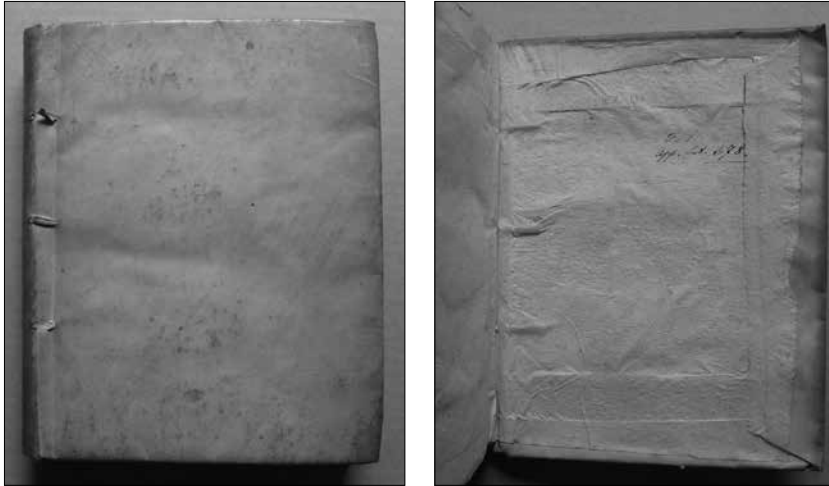


Figure 10. Laced-case double cover in parchment over cartonnage (Joannes Meursius, *Atticarum Lectionum Libri VI. Un Quibus Antiquitates plurima, nunc primum in lucem eruta, proferuntur*, Leioden: Ex Officina Elzeviriana, 1617 (*Antiquariaat Brinkman, Amsterdam, seen in 2013*).

- a. the exterior of the left cover
- b. the interior of the right cover showing the turn-ins of the cartonnage inner cover at head, tail and fore-edge

The sequence of layers at the top outer corner of the right cover, where a torn pastedown gives safe access to what lies underneath (the red clip is there to prevent the tear from being extended), shows how the cover was assembled. The cartonnage cover was folded at head and tail and the parchment was then folded over it (Fig. 10c), its turn-ins pasted to the cartonnage turn-ins, and the corners mitred (they line up exactly on the mitred edges). The fore-edge turn-in of the cartonnage cover still has adhered to it, under the parchment secondary cover, the outer deckle edge of an earlier pastedown (Fig. 10d), showing that the cartonnage once formed the only cover of the book, presumably with the earlier sewing. The new pastedown from the resewing of the book can be seen on the parchment fore-edge turn-in (Fig. 10e).



Figure 10.c. – e. the cartonnage showing the turn-ins pasted to the cartonnage turn-ins, the fore-edge turn-in under the parchment secondary cover, the outer deckle edge of an earlier pastedown and new pastedown

The evidence of the construction of this book shows that the resewing of the book with the parchment cover was a well-considered piece of work, which raises the question as to why the book should have been left uncut after it was resewn. It would seem that, so far as we know (which is not very far, it has to be said), it would be unlikely for a temporary binding made to be used within the booktrade (that is, a book for sale) would have been given a secondary cover of good quality parchment, yet at the same time why would a private owner in the first half of the seventeenth century not have the edges cut on a book in a permanent cover after it had been resewn? My guess, and this is all it can be, is that the person responsible for the parchment cover had bought a large paper copy uncut because he wanted the widest possible margins. This may have been an aesthetic or bibliophilic decision (and an Elzevier edition might well excite that sort of interest) or possibly a practical decision, to leave wide margins for annotations (though there are none). My suspicion is that we are dealing here with an owner with a precocious interest in the deckle edge – giving him the widest margins on a large paper copy – and if so it gives us an insight into a little known corner of seventeenth- (or possibly eighteenth-) century bibliophily.

The analysis of this binding depends a lot on the science of layers, in order to see what lies on top of or under what, and the science of the stratigraphy of bookbindings is an essential tool in their analysis. It is, after, all the small corner of the endleaf stub that lies under the turn-in of the quarter green calico spine covering of a 1823 London edition (Fig. 11)¹⁹ that proves that is *not* the first cloth-covered adhesive-case binding made in England, as it at first appeared to be, as the stub was adhe-



Figure 11. The endleaf stub that lies under the turn-in of the quarter green calico spine covering of a 1823 London edition

¹⁹ Robert Henry. *The History of Great Britain, from the first invasion of it by the Romans under Julius Caesar. Written on a new plan. ... The Sixth Edition.* In Twelve Volumes. London : Printed for Baynes and Son ... and the other proprietors, vol. 2. [Lambeth Palace Library, B42 H39].

red to the board before the book was covered, making it a book bound in boards, not a case binding. William Pickering's claim to being responsible for the first one with his edition of Dr Samuel Johnson of June 1825 therefore still stands! It does however reveal a binding using a form of board attachment which is most unusual for an English binding, raising the question of who could have been responsible for this binding. However, the concept of stratigraphy allies the study of bookbindings with that of archæology, and the French phrase *l'Archéologie du livre* seems to me particularly apposite, as a binding can be likened to an archæological site in which every element must be studied undisturbed to see how it all fits together.

And if we are treating books as archæology, then inevitably we must elevate the importance of the book as an object, because that material object has locked up within it, as I hope I have shown, a significant part of the history of the book, much of which is not accessible by other means. In my opinion, the whole book is something that can be 'read', text, writing and printing, provenance and binding, it is just that the languages differ. There is therefore a really good reason to preserve books with as little interference as possible as they still have so much to teach us beyond what the text alone can hope to (and I have not touched in this lecture on the history of writing, printing, parchment, paper, leather, textile, and so on). To allow books to be studied in this way, libraries will have to work out how to give access to books by means other than the traditional bibliographic catalogue entries, because at the moment without access to the stacks, the study of bookbinding is essentially stopped in its tracks, and its valuable contribution to our understanding of the history and culture of the book will not be realized. What I believe is required is for rare-book libraries to accept that they are in part also museums, however much that word goes against the grain of centuries of traditional librarianship, and that the physical book has an important story to tell and one, so far at least as bindings are concerned, that we have scarcely begun to explore.

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Sažetak

KNJIŽNI UVEZI I POVIJEST KNJIGE

Tradicionalna knjiga pojavljuje se u fizičkom obliku koji je podložan okolnostima njezina nastanka i kasnije povijesti. Knjigoveža je dio te povijesti, zauzimajući mjesto između nastanka fizičkog teksta i njegova korištenja od strane čitatelja, bez obzira na to da li je čitatelj pripadnik elite ili je na dnu ekonomske ljestvice. Rad na uvezu odražava i ekonomske i kulturne okolnosti stvaranja knjige te kada i gdje je nastala, kroz razlike u tehnikama i korištenim materijalima za izradu uveza. Detaljna analiza uveza stoga osvjetljuje povijest svake pojedine knjige, kao i i povijest tiska i trgovanja knjigama općenito. Upotrebe šivanih knjižnih blokova bez korica (*boards*) kao sredstva za predstavljanje knjiga za prodaju i meke korice na papiru već u drugom desetljeću 16. stoljeća otkrivaju ekonomske učinke knjižarstva i način na koji su ljudi kupovali svoje knjige. Prisutnost dokaza drugačijih kulturnih utjecaja na jednom uvezu i nacionalnih praksi može otkriti kozmolitsku narav knjižarstva, kao što detaljni načina na koji je knjiga bila omotana mogu otkriti kako je pojedini vlasnik postupao sa svojim knjigama. Oni su bitne komponente povijesti knjige i trebaju biti sačuvani kako bi mogli odigrati svoju ulogu u otkrivanju arheologije knjige.

Ključne riječi: *uvezivanje, knjižarstvo, povijesni uvezi, povijest knjige*