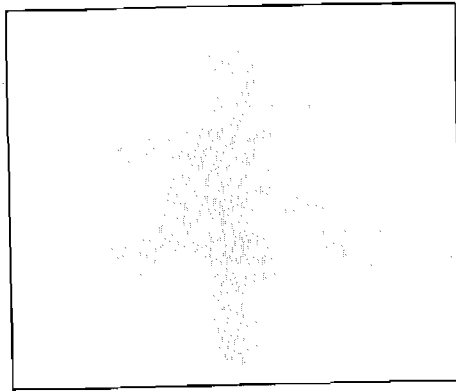


Kōjirō Ikegami

JAPANESE BOOKBINDING

Instructions from a Master Craftsman

adapted by Barbara B. Stephan



New York · WEATHERHILL · *Tokyo*

Contents

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portant publication by Teinosuke Endō, a former student of Mr. Ikegami's, that proved invaluable in clarifying certain details of the bookbinding procedure. On questions relating to Japanese paper, Yasuo Kume, Timothy Barrett, and Toshio Miyazawa (Paper Museum, Tokyo) provided important assistance. Paul Wills, Chief Conservator for Oriental Paintings at the British Museum, reviewed the section on paste and pastemaking, and offered invaluable comments on this and other aspects of Japanese conservation procedure. Mary Lee, head of the Pacific Regional Conservation Center in Honolulu, generously spent an afternoon going over recipes for paste and paper sizings, and textile researcher/librarian Bron Solyom shared with me her extensive file on the same subject. Bookbinder/conservator Hedi Kyle graciously supplied copies of several English-language articles on Japanese binding that I might otherwise have missed. For questions related to Western binding procedure and the most appropriate translation for certain Japanese terms, I consulted Seattle bookbinder Don Guyot, who answered with his usual clarity and thoughtfulness.

Numerous others generously shared their time and expertise. Mrs. Aiko Nakane, the delightful and knowledgeable owner of Aiko's Art Materials Import in Chicago, wrote an extremely detailed and helpful response when queried about supplies. Kumiko Akiyama and Tomoko Hisaki provided the answers to some knotty problems having to do with the nuances of particular Japanese phrases. Honolulu artist and papermaker Marcia Morse put me in touch with Edward Martinique, whose excellent writings on Chinese bookbinding provided enlightening contrasts to Japanese methods. Dr. Masato Matsui and Professor Robert Borgen (University of Hawaii), along with Mrs. Tamiyo S. Togasaki (Librarian, International House of Japan), all provided important bibliographical help. And Sara Oka, instructor of Japanese bookbinding at TEMARI, Center for Asian and Pacific Fibers (Honolulu), gave cheerfully of her time to join me in binding sessions.

Finally, I'd like to emphasize the role that Weatherhill, and in particular editor Pamela Pasti, have played in bringing out this book in its present form. Whereas other publishers might have settled for a verbatim translation, Weatherhill decided to delay publication so that changes and additions could be made to increase the book's value to Western readers. It has been a pleasure working with a publisher that takes its responsibility for producing quality books so seriously.

None of this would have been possible without the full cooperation of the author's son, Yukio, who shared his knowledge openly and patiently with all of us involved in coaxing his father's book into English.

BARBARA B. STEPHAN

Author's Preface

I was born in 1908 in a tiny village near Togane in Chiba Prefecture. My father was a scholar of Chinese classics, so I grew up in a house that was filled with books bound in the Oriental style. Whenever my father did some writing of his own, he would let me help him bind the handwritten pages into a book. He seemed to enjoy these binding sessions immensely. However, my real involvement with Japanese handbound books didn't begin until I was about thirteen.

Looking back now, I realize that my father's bookbinding skills were not impeccable. Still, he gave me a number of valuable tips on how to do it well. For example, he told me not to fold the cover to some predetermined size, which was what most people did. Instead, I should first trim the text to its finished dimensions, and then fold the cover to match the size of the text. He also taught me an easy way of aligning the pages by using the inner corner of a drawer. His practice when binding a book was to stack the pages, secure them together with a string of twisted paper, and then go to the village paper mounter to have the uneven edges neatly trimmed. After returning home with the trimmed text, he would attach the cover, pierce holes along the spine, and bind the book with thread.

This was in the 1920s, when there was none of the speedy printing and copying services that are available today. Those who wanted to share their work with others had to copy out the text by hand and then hand-bind it. My father seemed at his happiest when he was binding books. Watching him go through the steps of the binding process is one of the most treasured memories of my childhood.

After finishing school, I moved to Tokyo, and in 1928 I secured a job as secretary and assistant to the journalist and critic Sohō Tokutomi. Sohō (his pen name) reportedly had 100,000 books in his private library, many of which were valuable collector's items that today would be classified as important cultural properties. Although my job title was secretary, a more accurate description of my work would have been librarian. My employer took very good care of his books, going so far as to have a second cover put on over the covers of even his ordinary books. A student was in charge of attaching these additional covers, and whenever I had time I would watch. My job was to fill in the title strip for the cover.

Sometimes Sohō would have book repairers come over to mend his important books. Once, around 1930, when he called in the famous Tokyo bookbinder Umekichi Ikegami to repair some books, a missing volume of a Northern Song-dynasty edition of the *Li chi cheng-i* (Commentary on the Book of Rites) was discovered. The volume had once been in the library of the Nichiren sect headquarters, but the Nichiren sect had unknowingly assumed it was of insignificant value. The truth was, however, that the book—a commentary on a classic text compiled by Confucius—no longer existed in China: the copy discovered was of the caliber of a national treasure. Repairing the book took months, and Sohō was pleased with the results. After that he often referred to Ikegami jokingly as “Confucius’ benefactor.”

More and more frequently I was sent to Umekichi Ikegami’s workshop with books that needed mending. The binder had a number of apprentices, and his studio, located in Tokyo’s Kanda district, was bustling. Whenever I had time, I would linger to watch them binding Japanese-style books and ask them to teach me more about it. At the same time I started going through the 100,000 volumes in the Sohō Tokutomi collection one at a time, examining how each was bound. This is how I took up my formal study of the book.

In 1931, with Sohō serving as go-between, I married Umekichi Ikegami’s oldest daughter. With this marriage, I was adopted into the Ikegami family as the third-generation bookbinder. I became a journeyman in bookbinding, my adopted father training me in the craft. The work was very demanding, and I hoped he would praise my work just once, but my wish was not to be granted. This was his policy toward all his apprentices.

The Ikegami family had moved to Tokyo from Saitama Prefecture in 1867. They started up a bookbinding business and in 1871 succeeded in getting a contract with the Ministry of Education to bind textbooks. Around the turn of the century their son Umekichi (my adopted father) began repairing old books. His skill was so great that he soon gave up what had originally been the main family business—mounting shoji, folding screens, and scrolls—to concentrate exclusively on binding books. In addition to Sohō Tokutomi, numerous other famous scholars admired Umekichi’s work.

After World War II, I was commissioned by the Japanese government to repair books that had been designated as national treasures and important cultural properties. Since June 1963 I have been carrying out this repair work in the Ikegami Conservation Workshops established both at the Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties and at the Tokyo National Museum. Even today, when most books are being bound Western-style, Japanese traditional binding techniques show no sign of dying out: I am happy to say that my son and grandson have both chosen to carry on the family business.

I have written and edited a few works of my own. Most of them have been bound Western-style, but I make it a practice to bind Japanese-style those that are only one or two hundred pages in length. This is not only because I can do it simply and easily but also because the work is pleasurable and produces a distinctive finished product. Japanese handbound books also have the advantage of being very lightweight.

Artisans, in general, want to pass their craft and skills on to future generations. But hand bookbinding can be difficult work, and some binders are loath to instruct others or reveal their techniques. I am not of that school. By writing this book, I am sharing my techniques and knowledge of Japanese bookbinding in hopes this will encourage the reader to try his own hand at the craft.

KŌJIRŌ IKEGAMI

CHAPTER ONE

Introducing Japanese Books

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Japan inherited from China all the essential elements for book production: a writing system for recording the spoken language, paper and ink, woodblock printing technology, and even a developed book style. The earliest form of Japanese book, modeled after the Chinese style, consisted of lengths of silk or paper wound into the shape of a handscroll. Known as *kansubon*, or “rolled book,” the handscroll was the dominant book form for nearly a thousand years after its introduction in about the fifth century.

Scroll books had the disadvantage of being inconvenient to store and awkward to unroll whenever the examination of a particular section of text was desired. Thus, during the Heian period (794–1185) a number of other book forms, also based on Chinese models, developed alongside the scroll. The simplest of these was the accordion book, constructed by folding the text of a scroll back and forth accordion fashion and adding covers to the front and back of the resulting stack. When a single cover encircled the text from front to back the book was known as a “flutter book” (*sempūyō*), since the concertina-like pages, being unattached at the spine, could easily flutter outward in a breeze. Albums constituted a third type of accordion binding. Instead of starting with a long roll of paper made by joining sheets of paper end to end, album books were made from sheets of paper folded once and joined together with paste along the unfolded edges, or along both the folded and unfolded edges, depending on the style. Whereas plain accordion books served as the main vehicle for recording printed Buddhist scriptures, albums served more as a display format for samples of calligraphy or painting.

The Heian book known as “butterfly book” (*detchōsō*) marked a more radical departure in binding style. Rather than being assembled concertina fashion, the papers for this book were folded in half with the text-side facing inward, stacked, and pasted together along the spine fold so that the back of each sheet was attached to the back of the neighboring sheet. Thus was produced the first “book-shaped”

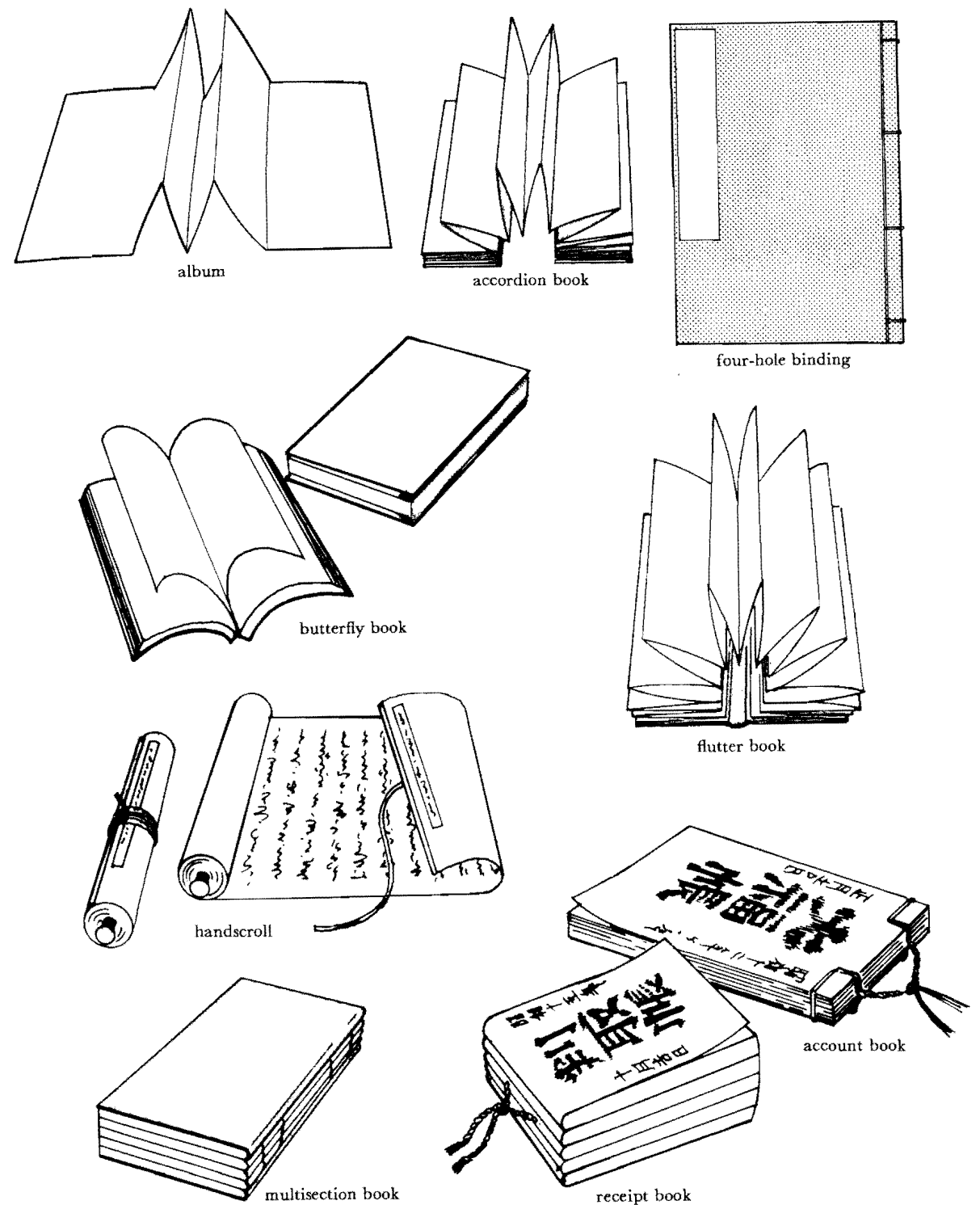
book, a style that did not die out completely until the seventeenth century. The name, which may have originally meant merely “pasted binding,” came to be considered an apt description of the book’s open pages, since they stood out in pairs like the wings of a butterfly.

The susceptibility of pasted bindings to insect damage may have been an impetus to the development of a new style of thread-sewn book. Whereas all previous bindings had been inspired by Chinese examples, one type of stitched book invented in the twelfth century was uniquely Japanese. Known as the multisection book, this style bears an uncanny resemblance to Western signature binding. To produce the book a number of sheets were stacked and folded in half to form a section, then several of these folded sections were stitched together through the central fold. In contrast to other bindings, which more often than not were printed with religious texts, multisection books seem to have been used almost exclusively for handwritten copies of native Japanese literature including poetry anthologies, novels, and diaries. In fact, some scholars refer to this style as Yamato binding to indicate its native Japanese origins.

Multisection binding enjoyed a period of popularity, but after the fourteenth century it began to be replaced by pouch binding (*fukuro toji*), a Chinese type of sewn binding that eventually supplanted all other styles and even today is considered the most typical Japanese style. The pouch-bound book is made up of sheets that are inscribed or printed on one side only, folded in half text-side out, and stacked together. Covers are added to the front and back, and the book is stitched along the spine—the edge opposite the folds—so that each double-leaved page forms an envelope, or pouch (*fukuro*), that is open at the top and bottom. While the basic four-hole binding is by far the most common type of pouch-bound book, there are other variations named after their more elaborate stitching patterns. These include Kangxi binding, hemp-leaf binding, and tortoise-shell binding. Chinese-style texts (called *tōhon*, or “Tang” books) are also bound in a modified version of four-hole binding. Other types of binding include Yamato binding, where fabric or paper cords are used to secure the text instead of thread, and the traditional account and receipt books, whose folded pages are held together with cord of twisted hemp.

The development of printing has always been closely linked to the development of the book in Japan. Although the techniques of woodblock printing were known to the Japanese at a very early date (Buddhist mantras printed in Japan in the eighth century are considered to be among the oldest printed documents in the world), printing was for many centuries a Buddhist monopoly, with the result that religious texts formed the bulk of material printed in the years before 1600. One reason that printing did not spread more widely is that paper remained an expensive commodity and only the monasteries—centers of both wealth and learning—could afford the costs of book production.

During the Edo period (1603–1868), however, a number of factors combined to bring about tremendous growth in the field of book publishing. Unification of the country under the Tokugawa shogunate brought years of peace and prosperity, the settled conditions encouraged the growth of towns and fostered increased literacy, and the paper industry expanded, making paper more readily available just



1. Major Japanese binding styles.

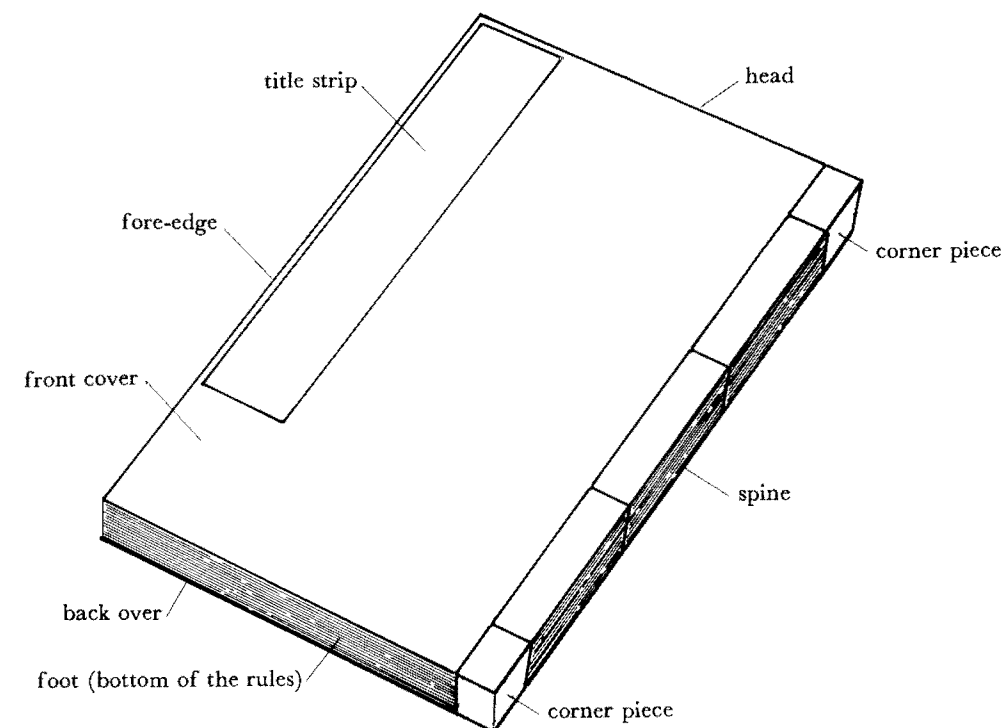
at the time when demand was growing. For the first time, classic works of Japanese literature like *The Tale of Genji* and *Tales of Ise*—which previously had circulated among the wealthy in manuscript form only—appeared in print. Soon books appeared on every conceivable subject, from scholarly historical works and studies of geography, mathematics, and moral conduct to picture books and popular novels. Among the latter were the famous blue-, red-, black-, and yellow-covered books, named after the color of the paper covers that adorned the pouch-bound texts. Basically picture books accompanied by a minimal amount of text, they dealt with children's stories, morality tales, romances, and accounts of everyday life, and enjoyed an immense following among the general populace.

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 led to the rapid introduction of Western technology and marked a revolution in book production in Japan. Traditional Japanese books, either written with brush or printed by woodblock, had always required soft, absorbent paper. (The fact that ink penetrates into this kind of paper, usually making the reverse side unusable, helps explain why so many styles of Japanese binding rely on double-leaved pages.) Metal type, in contrast, made use of a sized, harder-surfaced paper—one that could be produced most economically by machine. The new technology made it inevitable that the once-ubiquitous pouch-bound book would give way almost completely to the Western-style hardcover book printed with metal type on machine-made paper.

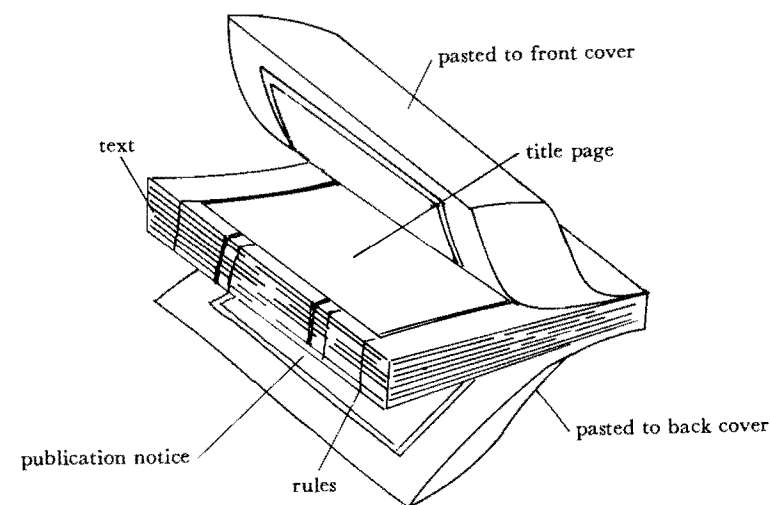
Today traditional binding remains in limited use for guest registers, calligraphic albums, artists' books, and certain special-edition printed texts. In addition to being appreciated for their distinctive beauty, however, Japanese bindings still appeal strongly to layperson and professional alike because they are much easier to execute and much easier to repair than their Western-style counterparts. Though large-scale production of Japanese-style books may not be commercially viable, there still are many dedicated binders, scholars, artists, and book lovers whose interest is sure to keep the tradition of Japanese binding alive.

STRUCTURE

The stitched side of a book is called the spine. Although the other three sides are called edges, the term fore-edge is generally used to designate the side opposite the spine, while the top edge is known as the head and the bottom edge as the foot, or the "bottom of the rules" (see Fig. 2). The expression "bottom of the rules" comes from the fact that traditional woodblock-printed texts often incorporate vertical and horizontal lines to divide the lines of text from each other and from the outer margin of the page. When ruled pages are folded in half, as is customary in pouch binding, the horizontal lines may be visible along the fore-edge fold, and there they serve as a guide in aligning the text pages. For machine-printed texts, it would be a simple matter to assemble the text by simply folding and stacking the pages, but the irregularity implicit in woodblock printing makes it necessary for block-printed pages to be stacked and adjusted one by one in an exacting procedure known as



2. Parts of a book.



3. Lining up the rules.

“lining up the bottom of the rules” (see Fig. 3). The fact that the rules along the fore-edge of Chinese books are always evenly aligned is an indication of the high regard the Chinese have for the written word.

Sometimes the inside surfaces of the book covers are lined with special paper. These are called endpapers. The color and pattern of the endpapers are chosen with an eye to complementing and enhancing the character of the book.

The text will often be separated from the front and back covers by an additional sheet of paper. The page that comes before the text serves as the title page; that which follows the text records printing and publication information, known as the colophon or publication notice. Most older books do not have such a notice. The insertion of a blank page, or flyleaf, after the page bearing the publication notice is the mark of a superior binding.

The flyleaf found on novels published by booksellers during the Edo period (1603–1868) usually consists of a single page rather than a pouch-style folded page. Sometimes you will find books of this period that have been rebound with a folded-page flyleaf, an indication that the person who performed the rebinding did not know the correct style.

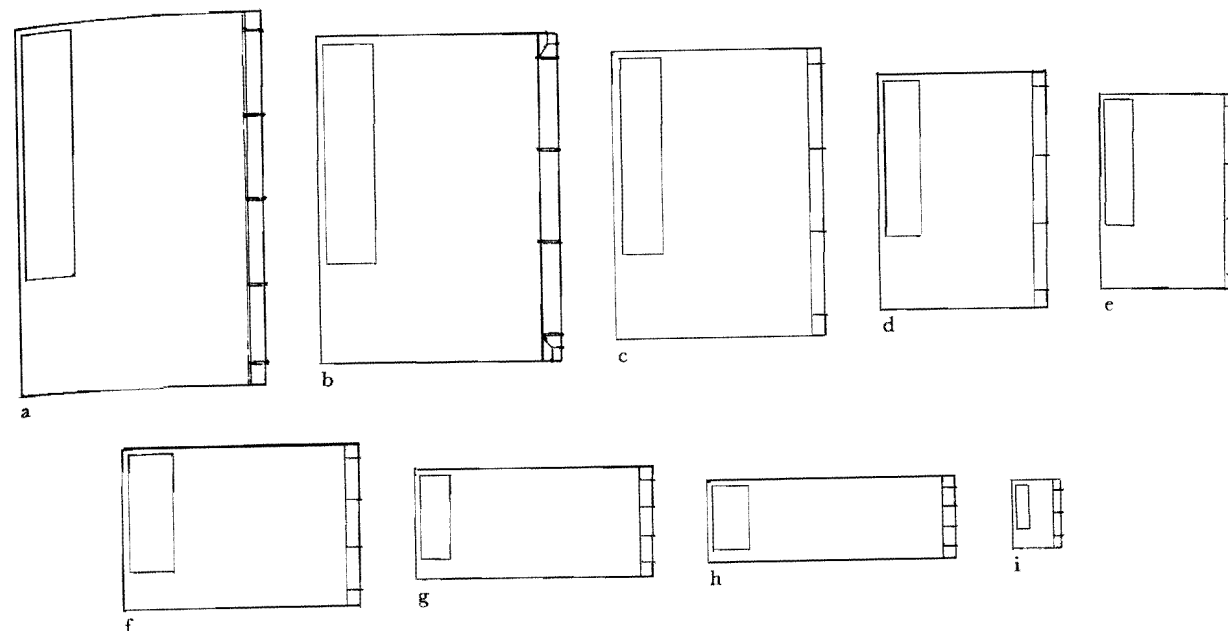
STANDARD BOOK SIZES The finished dimensions of a traditional Japanese book are determined by the size of the paper used as the text. The two most common sizes are *hanshi* and Mino, both named after types of Japanese paper. Books made of *hanshi* paper are the most common. The name *hanshi*, literally “half paper,” comes from the fact that a sheet of *hanshi* is about half the size of one of the common papers of Japan’s middle ages. *Hanshi* paper varies in size depending on where it is made; in general it runs from about 325 × 240mm / 12³/₁₆ × 9⁷/₁₆” up to 350 × 260 mm / 13³/₄ × 10¹/₄”. A “*hanshi* book” is a book made from *hanshi* paper that has been folded in half and trimmed. Its dimensions, which can also vary, are approximately 165 × 235mm / 6¹/₂ × 9¹/₄”.

A larger book is produced from Mino paper, a paper that originated in present-day Gifu Prefecture, east of Kyoto. Mino paper comes in three sizes: small, medium, and large. Books made from medium-size Mino paper that has been folded in half are called Mino books (finished size approximately 200 × 280mm / 7⁷/₈ × 11”).

Although *hanshi* and Mino books are the most common, both larger and smaller sizes exist. Books larger than Mino size are known as *ōhon*, or “large books.” Books that are one-half Mino size are called *chūhon*, or “medium-size books,” while those that are one-half *hanshi* size are known as *kohon*, or “small books.” Miniature books (*mamehon*) are those that are one-quarter or less of the standard Mino or *hanshi* book.

Both Mino and *hanshi* paper can also be made into books that are wider than they are tall. Known as oblong or horizontal books (*yokohon*), these generally come in one-half, one-third, and one-fourth the standard sizes. The one-half size oblong book is also known as a “pillow book” (*makurabon*), possibly because it could fit in the wooden base of certain Japanese headrests for sleeping, or possibly because of its resemblance to the shape of a traditional Japanese pillow.

Another style of book is the “square book” (*masugatabon*), so called even though its dimensions do not form a perfect square. In addition, books of nonstandard



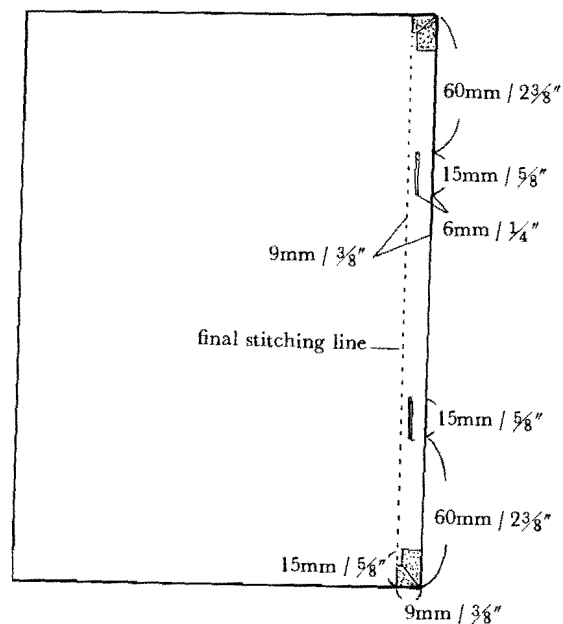
4. Standard book sizes: *a*, “large book”; *b*, Mino book; *c*, *hanshi* book; *d*, “medium-size book” (half Mino size); *e*, “small book” (half *hanshi*-book size); *f*, oblong book, half size (“pillow book”); *g*, oblong book, one-third size; *h*, oblong book, one-fourth size; *i*, miniature book. The oblong books pictured (*f–h*) are based on Mino book dimensions.

sizes can be made from papers such as *torinoko* (sometimes called Japanese vellum) and *shintorinoko* (“new”—i.e., machine-made—*torinoko*), which are available in sizes up to about 900 × 1800mm / 35¹/₂ × 70³/₄”. Today it is not unusual for binders to disregard standard book sizes and instead choose dimensions that suit their personal tastes or the materials on hand.

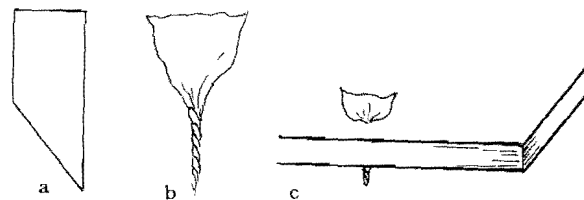
INNER BINDING The first step in binding most Japanese books is to fold the text papers neatly in half. Then the folded pages of the text are lined up, holes are pierced along the spine, and the text is bound together with a narrow strip of Japanese paper that has been twisted into a string. This is known as the inner binding, or *nakatoji*. In former times the pages were secured like this in one place only, regardless of the size of the book. Nowadays they are bound in two places (see Fig. 5).

The inner binding of the text plays a very important role in Japanese bookbinding. It strengthens the book and acts as insurance against the text falling apart should the outer binding thread ever break. By holding the text secure, the inner binding also facilitates the final binding process.

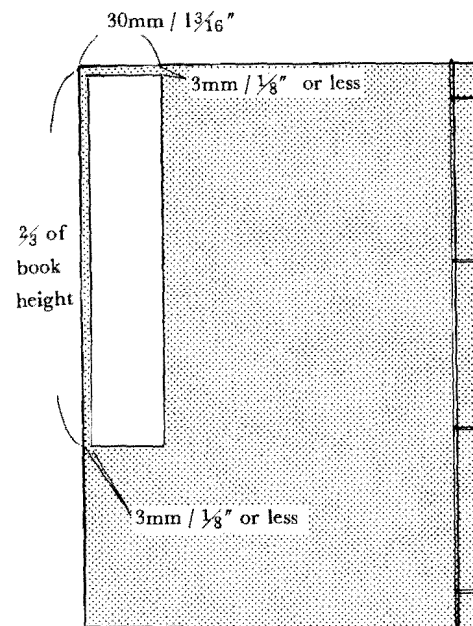
The style of inner binding has varied over the centuries. In one variety known as monk’s binding, short twists of paper were passed through holes at two points along



5. Placement of inner binding and corner pieces (for a *hanshi* book).



6. Making paper twists for monk's binding: *a*, cut a paper strip diagonally; *b*, twist one end between thumb and forefinger; *c*, insert twist in hole near spine.



7. Placement of title strip.

the spine. Instead of being knotted, the string ends were trimmed to a length of about $3\text{mm} / \frac{1}{8}$ ", stiffened with paste, and then flattened with a light blow from a mallet (see Fig. 6). This method, thought to have originated in China, produced a very durable product and was used until the early seventeenth century.

CORNER PIECES Corner pieces (*kadogire*), which are actually more decorative than functional, are small rectangles of cloth wrapped around the top and bottom corners of the spine of a pouch-bound book. The corner pieces are attached to the text with thick paste after the inner binding has been completed and the spine has been trimmed.

The size of the corner pieces varies with the size and style of the book. For a *hanshi*-size book, corner pieces usually extend about $9\text{mm} / \frac{3}{8}$ " along the top or head of the book and $15\text{mm} / \frac{5}{8}$ " down the spine; for Mino size, the standard measurements would be about $12\text{mm} / \frac{1}{2}$ " along the top and $18\text{mm} / \frac{1}{16}$ " down the spine.

Due to complaints that corner pieces block air circulation and thus invite insects, nowadays they are sometimes eliminated.

TITLE STRIP Also called the cover title or the outer title, the title strip (*daisen*) is attached either near the fore-edge or in the center of the front cover. On a *hanshi*-

size book, the standard title strip is about $30\text{mm} / 1\frac{3}{16}$ " wide and about two-thirds the height of the book (see Fig. 7). On a Mino-size book, it is approximately $33\text{mm} / 1\frac{5}{16}$ " wide and, again, two-thirds the height of the book. The height of the title strip should never be less than two-thirds the height of the book.

When attached near the fore-edge, the title strip should be no further than $3\text{mm} / \frac{1}{8}$ " from both the head and fore-edge of the book cover.