STAB BINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Covers: Traditionally, the front and back side-covers for a stab binding are separate sheets, allowing for an exposed spine. The side-covers might have a foredge turn-in. The approach to the covers is generally limited. To augment this, I will describe eight non-adhesive covers specifically devised for stab bindings. See: page 93.

The Book Block: The book block can be a stack of single sheets. Often stab bindings utilize folios as single sheets. Folios are bound along the open edge, stacked one on top of each other. The folds become the foredge of the book block. Fairly thin paper is used to allow the pages to slink when turned, since each "sheet" is now 2-ply.

Advantages of this approach are that pictures and/or text need be printed on only one side of the sheet. It is then folded to form a recto/verso. This cuts down cost in printing, while utilizing more paper. In constructing one-of-a-kind photographic books, this binding procedure allows freedom of design. Special photo paper, such as some photo mural, A, or N Surface can be folded without cracking the emulsion. The recto/verso printing is side by side on the sheet, then folded back to back during binding. This allows for bleeds, or printing around the foredge to the verso.

Text and picture can be printed, eliminating the need to paste either on the page. Mounting photographs onto blank sheets gives a cumbersome page. Compositionally the layout is imprisoned within borders. The photograph becomes an island, far more difficult to incorporate into the composition of the book, as opposed to the individual images. Each picture must be subordinate to the total.

The photograph is not the "picture", unless it is bled to the edges. Everything in view on the open folio is the picture. That includes text and borders, if any. When photographs are centered, with the larger page taking up slack, the photographs are composed, but the page, the opened folio, and the book are not.

Printing on stiff double weight photo paper, then dry-mounting to a sturdy blank stock is a far inferior approach, insisting upon borders. The blank stock is only for support. The page is not imaged, only the photograph. It is reluctance to compose the book, and parts thereof, and insistence upon working in the single sheet format, then compiling, rather than imaging the multiple page format.

Another advantage of folds at the foredge is that whatever is imaged across the fold is seen dotted on the folds when the book is closed, decorating the foredge of the closed book.

Rather than seeing stab bindings as just another binding, think of books which you can make which are only possible because of single sheet bindings. For instance, if you wanted each leaf a different color, that would be impossible with folios or sections. Make a list of the unique characteristics inherent to single sheet codices.

The cyclical pattern of sewing and wrapping the spine is common to all the stab bindings. I suggest you try the 4-hole stab binding first, as it is the easiest. The other bindings will then be easier to follow.

PREPARATION for STAB BINDINGS

Preparation for the following four traditional stab bindings is the same.

Thread: No knots are visible on the outside of the bindings. If you run out of thread during the binding, it is difficult to tie a weaver's knot inside. Therefore it is better to start with an excess of thread to insure enough to sew the binding with one length.
The Japanese 4-Hole Binding will need a length of thread approximately three times the height of the book block. The others require considerably more thread. For instance, the Tortoise-Shell Binding with a 6” tall book block needs 36” of thread to sew.

**Covers:** Construct the two covers, and assemble the single sheets or folios-as-sheets. Various covers, other than the traditional, which might be utilized with stab bindings will be described in the following section. Place the covers on each end. Jog the unbound book on its tail, then on the backbone to align. You will be ready to pre-pierce the stations. Position and number of stations vary with each of the stab bindings.

**How to Pierce Stab Bindings:** Piercing through a book block is more a challenge than piercing individual sections. A motorized paper drill is ideal, but most binders do not have access.

To pierce with a bradawl, place blotters on each side of the covers, and a piece of 3/4” plywood on each side. Plywood and blotters should be near, but not extend over the sewing stations. Clamp with C-clamps. Lay another sheet of plywood under the exposed part of the side-cover for support. Leave 1/4” crack between for path of needle along the line of the stations.

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**JAPANESE 4-HOLE BINDING**

Yotsume Toji

**SEWING STATIONS**

The four sewing stations are 3/8” in from the spine-edge. Station 1 is 1/2” up from the tail. Station 4 is 1/2” down from the head. Stations 2 and 3 are equally spaced between. Pierce the stations.

Each station will eventually be sewn three times. Each time a station is sewn for the first time, the thread will be wrapped around the spine to form the small horizontal stitches from cover to cover.

The reason the stab sewings are never started at the end stations is to ensure the knot does not hang out of the head or tail.

**ELABORATED SEWING PROCEDURE**

1. Pick up front cover and about half of the book block. Start the needle on the inside of book block at station 2, proceeding up through, coming out the front cover. Pull all but 4” of thread to outside. Lay this half back in position on top of the remainder of the book block. Make sure the loose thread inside the book extends towards the foredge. If it is near the backbone, it will become entangled in the sewing. It will need to be free in order to tie off at the end of the sewing cycle.
2. Proceed around the spine, take the needle through station 2 of the back cover, coming out through the front cover.
3. Proceed on the front cover to station 3. Go through to back cover. Wrap around the spine to front cover. Go through station 3 to back cover. Tighten stitches as you go. Form the spine wrap, so it is at right angle to the spine-edge.
4. Proceed on the back cover to station 4. Go through station 4 on the back cover, through to the front cover. Wrap around the spine to back cover. Go through station 4 on the back cover to the front cover.
5. Keep proceeding in the same direction. Since there are no more stations, the manner in which the sewing direction is changed is to wrap around the head to the back cover. Then proceed towards the tail to the next station, which is number 4.
Take the needle through station 4 to front cover. Since the spine has already been wrapped, proceed on the cover to station 3.

6. Go through station 3 to back cover. Since the spine has already been wrapped, proceed on the back cover to station 2. Take the needle through 2 to front cover. Since the spine has already been wrapped, proceed on the front cover to station 1.

7. Take the needle through station 1 to back cover. Wrap around the spine to front cover. Take the needle through station 1 on the front cover coming out on the back.

8. Proceed on the back cover to the tail. Wrap around the tail to front cover. Proceed to station 1 on front cover. Go through station 1 to back. Proceed on back cover to station 2.

9. Open book to the middle page to the loose thread. Take the needle into station 2 on back cover and proceed to the middle page, bringing the needle out beside the loose thread. Tie a knot, pulling the knot into the gutter. Trim loose ends so they do not hang out of the book block.
REVIEW or CONDENSED SEWING PROCEDURE
1. Pick up front cover with half of book block. Start inside at station 2, proceeding up through that part of the book block, coming out the front cover. Pull all but 4” of thread to outside. Lay this half in position on top of the remainder of book block, with loose thread extending towards the foredge.
2. Wrap around spine. Proceed to station 2. Go through to front.
3. Proceed to station 3. Go through to back. Wrap around the spine to front. Go through station 3 to back cover.
4. Proceed to station 4. Go through to the front. Wrap around spine to back cover. Go through station 4 to the front cover.
5. Wrap around the head to back cover. Proceed to station 4. Go through 4 to front cover. Proceed to station 3.
6. Go through station 3 to back cover. Proceed to station 2. Go through to front cover. Proceed to station 1.
7. Go through to back cover. Wrap around spine to front. Go through station 1 to the back.
8. Proceed to the tail. Wrap around the tail to front cover. Proceed to station 1. Go through 1 to back. Proceed to station 2.
9. Open book to the middle page to the loose thread. Go through station 2 on back cover and proceed to the middle page, coming out beside the loose thread. Tie a knot.

TORTOISE-SHELL
Kikko Toji

Sewing Stations: Each of the traditional four sewing stations has been compounded to triple units. These are denoted as stations A, B, and C. Station 1B is 1/2" up from the tail. Station 4C is 1/2" down from the head.

All the A stations are 1/2" in from the spine-edge. All the B and C stations are 1/4" in from the spine. Measure and draw the stations on a scrap of paper which is the height of the cover. Place the paper as a guide on the front cover. Pierce the covers and book block stations.

ELABORATED SEWING PROCEDURE
The stations will be sewn in the following order: Station 2, 3, 4, 1, and back to 2.

Starting at an Even Numbered Unit:
1. Pick up front cover and about half of the book block. Start the needle on the inside at station 2A, proceeding up through that part of the book block, coming out the front cover. Pull all but 4” of thread to outside. Lay this half back in position on top of the remainder of the book block. Make sure the loose thread inside the book extends towards the foredge. If it is near the backbone, it will become entangled in the sewing. It will need to be free in order to tie off at the end of the sewing cycle.

Steps 2 through 5 describe the remainder of the sewing for stations 2A, 2B, and 2C:

Sewing an Even Numbered Unit:
2. Proceed around the spine to the back cover. Take the needle through station A, coming out through the front cover.
3. Proceed on the front cover to station B. Go through to back cover. Wrap around the spine to front cover. Go through station B to back cover. Tighten stitches as you go to form the spine wrap.
4. Proceed on the back cover to station A. Go through station A to the front cover. Proceed to station C.
5. Take the needle through C on the front to back cover. Wrap around the spine to front cover. Go through C to the back cover.