Hedi Kyle

"Orihon's Triumph: Origin and Adaptations of the Concertina Fold"


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"The Book as a Spinate"

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Orihon's Triumph:
Origin and Adaptations of the Concertina Fold

by Hedi Kyle

For several thousand years the scroll served as the
major carrier of written information. Eventually, two
important bookforms emerged, namely, the codex and
the Orihon (Figures 1, 2, 3).

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

THE ORIHON AND THE FUKURO-TAJI
The Orihon originated in China and was subject to dif-
ferent methods and priorities. Also called Leporello,
concertina, accordion or zigzag-folded book, the Orihon
still bears a close resemblance to the scroll (Figures 4,
5). Instead of unrolling, it unfolds to a continuous
length. The scroll is somewhat awkward to handle
and, in order to get to a certain part in the text, several
feet of it may have to be unwound first. The Orihon
eliminates this procedure via its folds. They break the
length of the book into pagelike sections, which are
easily accessible. The folds that occur at the spine and
the fore-edge are in no way restricted; they are neither
sewn nor pasted together. They allow the book to
expand to its entire length. They can also be confined
to the reader's hands and folded sections can be turned
like the leaves of a codex.

continued on the next page
The unbound spine, however, was apparently not the solution for the majority of books. This structure also required a more rigid paper and, since most oriental papers are thin and flexible, sheets often had to be laminated and joined together to achieve the somewhat stiff quality and length necessary to make the Orihon function well. For practical purposes some changes had to be made, and they resulted in the Fukuro-toji, the most common later book structure in China, Japan, Korea and elsewhere, which was used until recently when the Western codex was adopted. The Fukuro-toji no longer has folds at the spine. The leaves are thin and folded at the fore-edge only, thus concealing the otherwise visible reverse image of the printed leaf. The covers are more substantial but still flexible enough to open and close without a hinge after covers and textblock have been stab-sewn along the spine edge. Commonly four holes are used, but there may be an additional hole at head and tail to reinforce the corners (Figures 6, 7).

**Figure 6**

**Figure 7**

**Figure 8**

**Figure 9**

**Figure 10**

**Figure 10a**

For the boards a variety of materials can be used such as paper laminates, bristol, mounting board or balsa wood. The boards may be covered with decorated paper, silk, linen, vellum or even leather. A well-made and balanced Orihon is a pleasure to handle and to manipulate. It is, therefore, not surprising that this book form has been used for children's books all over the world. (Figure 11.)

**Figure 11**

**THE CONCERTINA FOLD**

Though it is quite clear that the general tendency in bookmaking leans towards a firm spine which restricts pages to the necessary movement they must have in order to be read, the Orihon did not sink into oblivion. This concertina fold is too basic and sound as a structural element, and too adaptable as such, to be abandoned. My intent is to point out some of the uses to which this incredibly versatile fold lends itself. I have been fascinated by and experimented with this device for so many years that, even at night in my dreams, the most unlikely things have a tendency to fold in accordion fashion. Being a conservator as well as someone who likes to explore structures and make books that in a sense are not traditional, the concertina fold has become very important in my work. Once aware of its multiple uses, I find it employed all around, especially in alternative book structures, be it for purposes of conservation, adding additional materials, or display.

Before we turn to the adaptations of the concertina fold, let us once more go back to the original Orihon. Simple as such a structure may seem, it requires knowledge of materials and their interactions as well as skills in cutting, pasting and folding techniques. There are three basic methods used to prepare the folded length. It can be made out of one long sheet of paper (Figure 8). Leaves can be pasted recto to verso (Figure 9), or page sections can be hinged together (Figures 10 and 10a).

**Figure 12**

**ADAPTATIONS OF THE CONCERTINA FOLD**

The next two examples show the concertina fold transformed into a pleated guard with adjoining endsheets (Figure 12).

In Figure 13 each signature is sewn into the one-quarter inch wide pleats of the guard, which should be made from a soft, thin handmade paper. Additional endsheet folios may be added. This method works best with small books that have no more than twelve signatures. They can be link sewn or sewn on linen tapes. The pleated guard protects the signatures of rare and fragile books from adhesive and makes their bindings completely reversible.

**Figure 13**

continued on page 6
Orihon with an additional narrow pleat to make up for the added bulk caused by enclosures. In Figure 19 each pleat is inserted and pasted into a folio whose fold is located at the fore-edge. Windows can be cut out to create mats.

The last group of book structures concerns itself with the display of small scale scenarios. Between their closed covers they conceal an unexpected surprise. This element in bookbinding can be found in many delightful examples, especially in books made during the Victorian age. Today, we may take a fresh look at some of these structures and use them in new and creative ways.

Photographs, archival and ephemeral materials or samples of diverse papers, textiles or small works of art often present a challenge if they are to be incorporated into a book structure. The following two prototypes suggest simple, informal solutions. Fig. 18 shows the
George Fox is one of many board members and volunteers who helped make the auction a success. Credit goes to Diane Blakely, Karen Zukor, Celia Ramsey, Eleanor Ramsey, Frances Butler, Judith Dunham, Leigh McLellan, Georgianna Greenwood, Connie Thorpe, David Belch, Johanna Goldschmid, Alastair Johnston and Janice Mae Schopfer for all their work.

The PCBA would especially like to thank Joanne Sonnichsen, who carried on nearly all the organizing necessary to an event like this; without her, there literally would have been no auction. A complete list of donors follows on the next page; many thanks to them all.

Even before Reaganomics made the decision an academic question, the PCBA designated itself a volunteer organization. This means that we do not exist through the bequest of major grants [or even, at this point, through minor ones], relying on a solid membership and occasional fund-raising events like the book auction for financial support, and the work of our board and our members for everyday functioning. There are no paid staff positions at the PCBA, which means that every piece of mail sent out or every item mounted in an exhibit is handled through volunteer help. And, Ronald Reagan notwithstanding, volunteering can be fun and rewarding. Need writing or editing experience? Come work on The Ampersand. Like to learn how to mount an exhibit? Try working on our annual member's exhibit, or formulate a theme exhibit appropriate to the PCBA philosophy and membership. Want to know what that philosophy is, and who our members are? Help revise the by-laws, or work on the membership committee! Have some ideas for speakers, workshops or programs? Help set up a lecture or events series. The PCBA is only as good as we all make it; the great thing about a volunteer organization is that there is always room for new ideas. Start giving us yours now. Think about volunteering in one of the following areas:

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