



The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding

J.A. Szirmai

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In the past, studies of the history of bookbinding were mainly concerned with the exterior decoration. This book focuses attention primarily on the physical aspects of the binding and its construction principles. It is an expanded version of a series of lectures delivered by the author while Visiting Professor at the University of Amsterdam in 1987, supplemented with the results of ten years of intensive research in major libraries on the Continent, the United Kingdom and the USA. It surveys the evolution of binding structures from the introduction of the codex two thousand years ago to the close of the Middle Ages. Part I reviews the scanty physical evidence from the Mediterranean heritage, the early Coptic, Islamic and Ethiopian binding structures and their interrelation with those of the Byzantine realm. Part II is devoted to a detailed analysis of Western binding techniques, distinguishing the carolingian, romanesque and gothic wooden-board bindings as the main typological entities; their structure and function is compared with those of contemporary limp bindings. The book is illustrated with over 200 drawings and photographs and contains a comprehensive bibliography.

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