

Chantry Library Bibliographies: No. 1: South Asian Paper by Jasdip Singh Dhillon

Jasdip Singh Dhillon has an MA in Book Conservation from Camberwell College of Arts, has been employed as a book conservator at the Oxford Conservation Consortium since 2017, and is the chair of Pothi Seva, a charitable organisation primarily committed to the conservation of Sikh manuscripts and printed texts. Dhillon's research interests are in South Asian papermaking and particularly the papers of Sikh manuscripts. As the first recipient of Icon Book and Paper Group's Frederick Bearman Research Grant, on 10 Dec 2018 Dhillon gave the first Frederick Bearman Memorial Lecture, and the following bibliography was provided to attendees. The Chantry Library is pleased to feature Dhillon's bibliography as the first in a new series, and is grateful to the Icon Book and Paper Group for its support.

Introduction

South Asian papermaking has not received the same volume of scholarship as European papermaking. The development of filigranology (the study of watermarks) through the 19th and 20th centuries has meant European papermaking already has a considerable body of scholarship attached to it. More recent research has taken the form of precise technical studies on historic samples, regions and periods of papermaking. In contrast, with South Asian papers, the absence of watermarks has initially impeded the development of any technical research. Nonetheless, there have been a number of small but very important studies published over the past century, many of which have drawn upon surviving hand papermakers to build up an understanding of this important branch of Asian papermaking. The resources listed below are key for the study of South Asian paper, and my comments are meant to guide the novice and experienced paper historian alike.

Books

Bloom, Jonathan. *Paper before Print : The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*. New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 2001.

Chantry Library, Oxford

As an introduction to papermaking across Asia, Bloom's study is both thoroughly researched and also captivating to read. Although he does not cover South Asia in any great detail, his work underlines the importance of studying paper in different forms and contexts including paper as packaging, paper for architectural and artistic design transfers, paper for letter writing as well as paper for book production. Bloom's speculative exploration of the origins and spread of papermaking technology is particularly fascinating although this is a topic which has much scope for further research.

Hunter, Dard. *Papermaking by Hand in India*. New York: Pynson Printers, 1939.

Bodleian Library, Oxford

Dard Hunter's study of Indian papermaking was only printed in a run of 300 copies; each signed and numbered by Hunter. It is a uniquely important book due to the inclusion of 27 samples of handmade paper. Each sample is labelled with information relating to the paper-maker, location of the mill as well as fibre type and sizing. The samples are a rich study resource as they shed light on the types of papers being manufactured during the colonial period. Aside from the samples, this rare volume has large numbers of photographs relating to paper production and accurate descriptions of materials and methods used. Unlike other writers of the colonial period, Hunter is sympathetic towards the plight of troubled papermakers and shows a deep concern for the need to revive the dying tradition.

Konishi, Masatoshi. *Hāth-kāghaz : History of Handmade Paper in South Asia.* Shimla : New Delhi, 2013.
Bodleian Library, Oxford

For those seeking the most comprehensive overview of papermaking in South Asia, Konishi's book is an essential read. Konishi's book includes an extensive exploration of early papermaking and discusses some of the debates surrounding the origins of papermaking. More so than other writers, he underlines the need to consider the role played by sea-faring Arab traders in Western India (as opposed to Islamic political expansion from the north-west) in assisting the spread of papermaking. Additionally, he provides much information on the paper mills worked by inmates in colonial jails. Although he does not systematically analyse historical samples, his study provides the most systematic introduction to this topic overall.

Loeber, E. G. *Paper Mould and Mouldmaker.* Amsterdam: Paper Pub. Society (Labarre Foundation), 1982.
Chantry Library, Oxford

This relatively rare book is one of the treasures of the Chantry Library collection. Loeber's monograph on the history and construction of the papermaking mould is profusely illustrated with simple but beautiful monochrome diagrams detailing the minutiae of mould construction. The book is well-referenced throughout and the inclusion of richly-detailed further notes makes this book an essential research aide to the paper historian.

Articles

Kropf, Evyn, and Cathleen A Baker. "A Conservative Tradition? Arab Papers of the 12th-17th Centuries from the Islamic Manuscripts Collection at the University of Michigan." *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 4, no. 1 (2013): 1-48.

Chantry Library, Oxford (online resources)

This in-depth study of a small set of papers illustrates the multiple possibilities which open up through the physical and chemical analysis of a well selected range of samples. As well as providing a better understanding of their chemical composition, the article helps account for some notable features of papers from Arab regions including, quite notably, the tendency of delamination.

Vander Meulen, David L. "The Identification of Paper without Watermarks: The Example of Pope's Dunciad." *Studies in Bibliography: Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia* 37 (1984): 58-81.

Chantry Library, Oxford (online resources)

Vander Meulen's article details a set of approaches which allow one to examine and identify the vast quantity of European papers which lack watermarks owing to the practice of printing half-sheet impressions or simply the intentional omission (or removal) of a watermark by the papermaker. However, many of the analytical methods he explored can also be used for the study of Asian papers where there are no watermarks.

Online Resources

Soteriou Papermaking Archive

<http://soteriou.lib.uiowa.edu/>

Alexandra Soteriou's rich image archive is the result of years of field research across South Asia. These images are freely available to download for re-use. As well as images of surviving papermakers at work, it includes numerous photographs of abandoned or ruined paper mills in villages across India. The website also includes a significant bibliography on South Asian papermaking. In addition to the image archive, Soteriou's book "Gift of the Conquerors" is also an important resource, especially due to the inclusion of interviews with aged papermakers and the list of all functioning paper mills.