

PAPER

While papyrus was king in the Middle East, another medium was being used in China: **paper**. Paper usage was first recorded in China in 105 BC. It was made from rags, mulberry, and other fibers. The invention of paper is usually credited to Cai Lun, a Chinese court official who was searching for a cheaper, sturdier material than the traditional silk, bone, or bamboo that was widely used.

▶ *Diamond Sutra*, earliest dated printed book, ca. 868 AD. Discovered in a northwest China cave.



凡欲讀經先念淨口業真言遍

循唎

循唎

摩訶循唎

循唎

娑婆訶

奉請除災金剛

奉請辟毒金剛

奉請黃隨求金剛

奉請白淨水金剛

奉請赤聲金剛

奉請定除厄金剛

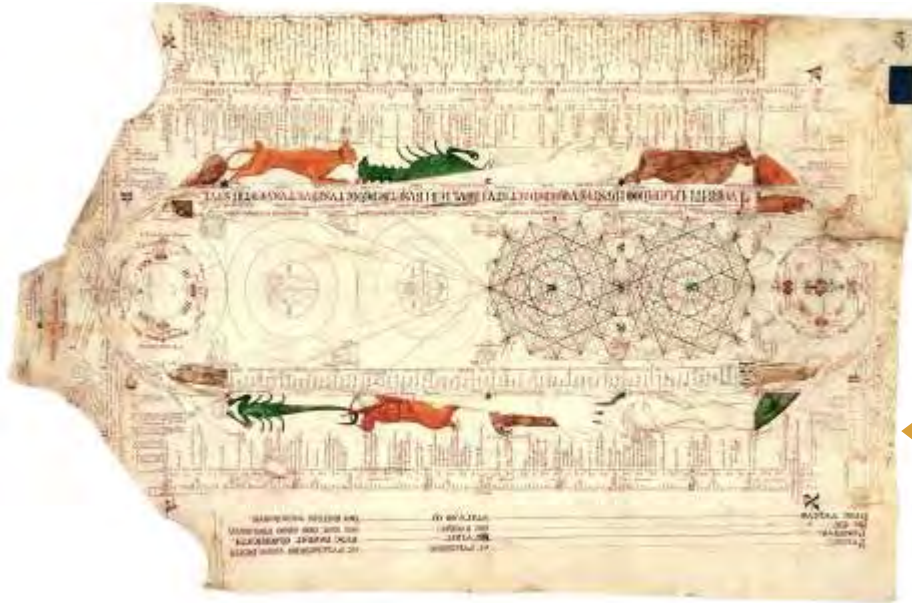
奉請紫賢金剛

奉請大神金剛

金剛般若波羅蜜經

PARCHMENT

Parchment, believed to have been invented in the ancient Greek city of [Pergamum](#) (modern Turkey) around the 2nd century AD, was made from specially prepared animal skin. Despite its high cost, parchment was the preferred writing media of medieval ages, when written texts and books were considered to be rare treasures.



Making parchment paper with calf skin

FUN FACT:

Recycling paper began LONG AGO! **Palimpsest**, a widely used type of paper especially favored during the Middle Ages, was created by recycling old parchment and vellum.



TIAN YI GE LIBRARY

The oldest library in Asia still in operation today, Tian Yi Ge was established in 1561. At one time it housed over 70,000 books/scrolls.



ONE BIG ENCYCLOPEDIA!

The Siku Quanshu or “Imperial Collection of Four” is the largest collection of books in Chinese history. This set of 37,000 volumes was completed in 1782 and three complete sets remain to this day.



Louisa Boyd (artist), modern concertina style, United Kingdom

CONCERTINA BOOKS

One of the earlier forms of books using paper in Japan was the **orihon** (“folding book”), which appeared in the Tang Dynasty (618-908 AD) and later was perfected in the Heian period (794-1185 AD). *Orihon* were individual sheets of paper arranged horizontally and glued together, creased at regular intervals and folded accordion-style. Folding books were most commonly used for hand-copied manuscripts at that time.

Also called **concertina** books, this format was more portable than a scroll and is thought to have been inspired by palm-leaf books which were carried along Indian and Chinese trade routes. They remain popular today as both a book printing style and artistic form.



Short biography of Murasaki Shikibu (author of *The Tale of Genji*), concertina style album, artist Adachi/Shôsei GINKÔ, 1891 Japan.



DLUWANG

Originating in Java, **dluwang** paper was created from the bark of the mulberry tree. The Javanese would cut out the inner bark from the tree, soak it in water, and then pound it repeatedly until it was smooth enough to write on. When done correctly, this format could last for a very long time. Well made pieces are still in excellent condition today.

HOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE

As papermaking found its way from China to the Middle East, Arab scholars began to collect libraries in mosques. These “halls of knowledge” were built and supported by different Islamic sects and were made available to the public. Secular works from these libraries made their way throughout Europe by way of Christian monks living in the border countries who would copy the manuscripts. This lend/copy system led to the massive libraries of the Renaissance.

Central Library of Quds Razavi Astan

Established in Iran sometime before 1457 as a center for studying mathematics and medicine, this library was open to the public. Over the centuries it has expanded into multiple areas of academic research and currently has 35 branches, all within the vicinity of the Holy Shrine. The main branch holds over 1.1 million volumes.



A SACRED DUTY TO PROTECT

The Timbuktu Manuscripts are a collection of roughly 400,000 manuscripts from West Africa, written in Arabic and several local languages including [Manding](#), [Songhay](#) and [Tamasheg](#). The manuscripts were written between 13th century to early 20th century and were passed down from generation to generation, often stored in family's homes. They eventually made their way to museums and libraries when efforts to preserve them began in the 1970's. In the past decade, weather, political unrest, and religious sectarian differences have placed these manuscripts in danger and efforts from both UNESCO and private groups have been made to remove the manuscripts from the area and better preserve them. During civil unrest in Mali, local families helped hide the manuscripts in their homes after the buildings that were previously housing them were targeted for destruction. These families are credited with saving thousands of priceless manuscripts.



Librarian Abdel Kader Haïdara led evacuation efforts of Timbuktu manuscripts during civil unrest in 2012. He and fellow co-workers packed thousands of manuscripts into metal trunks then smuggled them to safety.