

UNSUPPORTED SEWINGS

COPTIC STITCH

Various forms of this ancient binding evolved from the fourth century. As a structure, it is inferior to supported sewings, but the simplicity of the exposed sewing across the backbone, sewn onto the boards is appealing. As with any unsupported sewing, boards must be flush, so that book block rests upon the shelf during storage, as support from straps is lacking.

PREPARATION

Sections: At least 6 or 8 sections should be sewn to examine the pattern of sewing across the back.

Cover: The sewing is exposed, as there is no spine-cover. Separately wrapped boards can be paper-covered, without the use of adhesives.

It is better to use flush side-covers, especially if the depth of the text block is large otherwise the book standing on the shelf will sag, since it is an unsupported binding. If there aren't too many pages in the book, you may want to use an overhang cover. Cut the boards to size.

Sewing Stations: Stations for the sections are suggested at less than 1" intervals down the back. Station 1 is at the head. It is important that the end stations are fairly close to the head and tail to keep the book tighter. The stations adjacent to the head and tail should be 1/2" to 5/8" away to strengthen the end stations, which are the weakest.

The copic binding will be described and illustrated with a chain formed by a locking loop stitch, as opposed to using a chain formed by a U stitch, which lies flatter, but tears out easily.

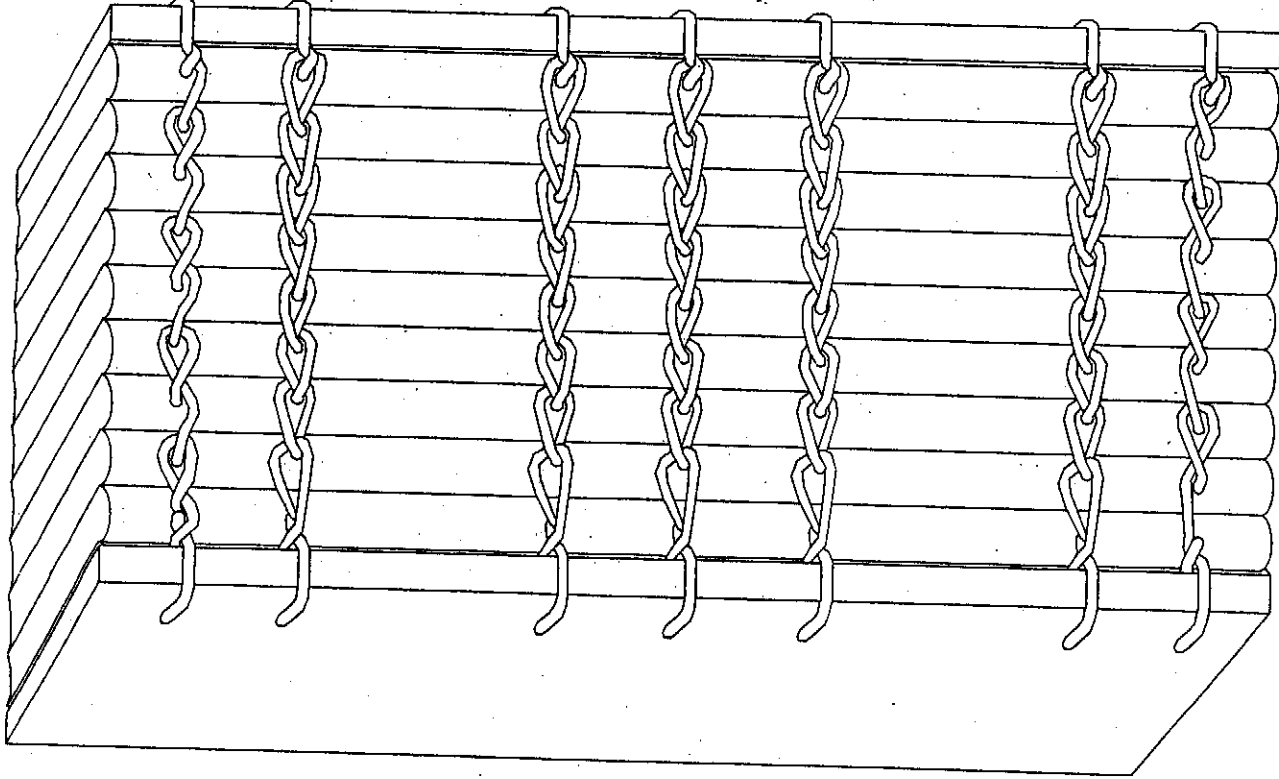
cover sewing stations

Each cover has one sewing station for each row of sewing. This station is no less than 1/8" in from the spine-edge, and level with the corresponding station on the book block. Pierce the cover after board is wrapped, using a marked section as guide. Do not take the bradawl too deeply, or it will rip to the edge. Hole should be slightly smaller in diameter than the needle for snugness.

Thread: Start with 4' of heavily waxed thread. If more is needed, add inside the section with a weaver's knot.

Non-Adhesive Bindings
 Keith Smith
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COPTIC BINDING
with exposed spine sewing



SEWING PROCEDURE starting at the head

Sewing the First Section and Board: If you sew from the head to the tail, you must start with the back side-cover and end section. If you wish to start sewing from the front cover and beginning section, sew from the tail to the head.

1. A single thread sews the sections and the boards. Start at the head on the inside of the section. Proceed to outside, leaving 3" thread inside the section. The "first" section here is the end section.
2. Proceed around the spine-edge onto the outside of the side-cover. Go through the station on the cover, exiting between the cover and the first section, away from the spine. Pull thread snug, bringing cover and section together.
3. Take needle from above the head and slip it behind the thread which connects the section and board. Pull thread through, and away from spine. Go into station 1 of the first section and tie a knot.
4. Proceed along the inside of the section towards the tail. Take the needle out the next station. Proceed around the spine-edge onto the outside of the side-cover. Go through the cover station exiting between the cover and the first section. Tighten thread bringing cover and section together. Cross under the thread between cover and section before going back into the section.
remaining stations on the first section and cover

Repeat step 4, until you have sewn the station at the tail of the first section, but do not take the needle back into the sewing station on the section.

After you go through the cover sewing station at the tail, come out onto the spine, taking the needle under the thread between the section and board. Tighten thread.

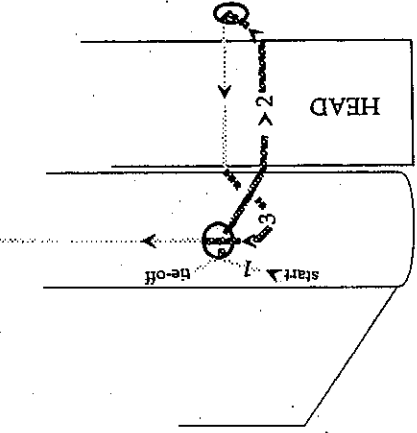
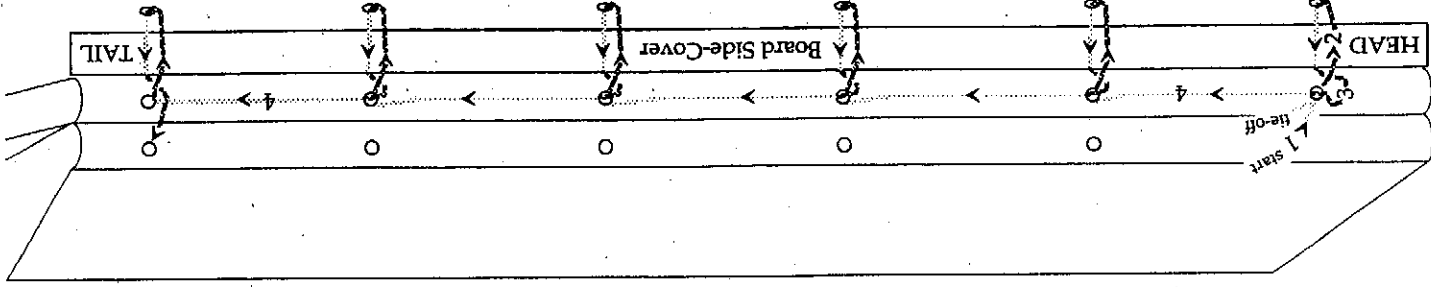
Sewing the Second Section:

5. Place the next section into position. Take the needle through the sewing station nearest the tail of the new section.
6. Proceed inside the section to the next station. Take the needle to the outside.
7. Proceed across the spine, take needle under the threads connecting the board and first section. Pull tight. Then take the needle back into the second section.

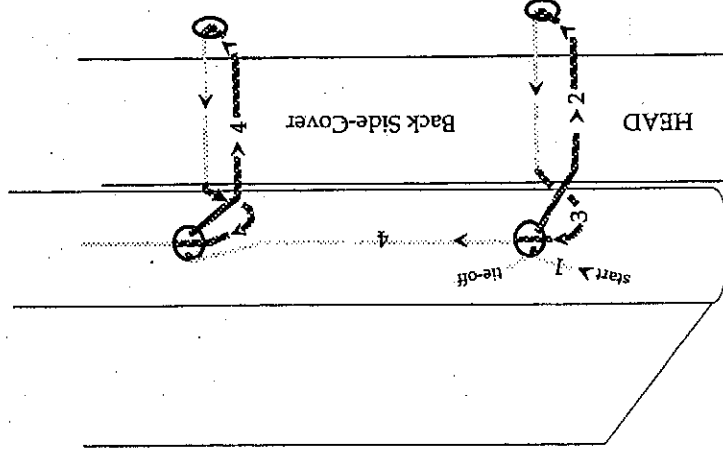
remaining stations on the second section

Repeat steps 6 and 7 until you have sewn all the stations of the second section, but do not take the needle back into the end station of the second section.

SEWING the FIRST SECTION and BOARD

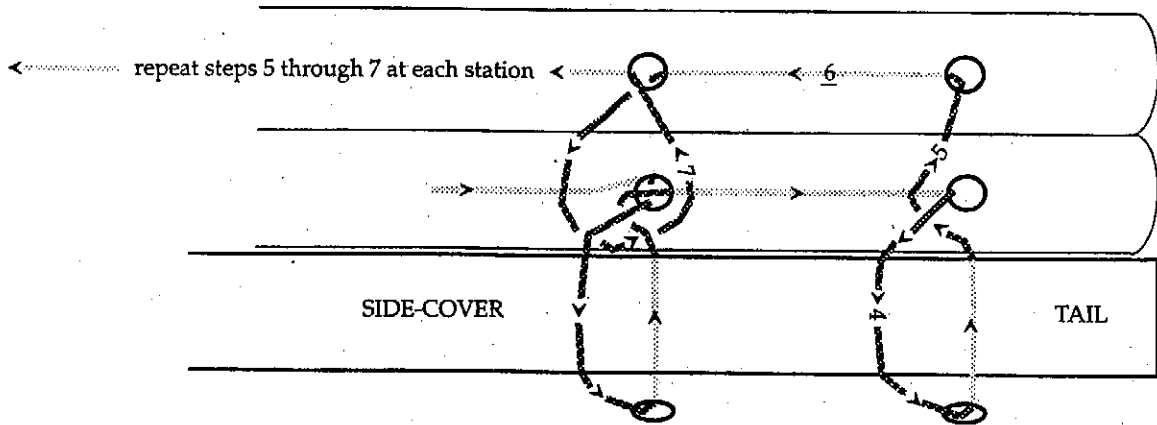
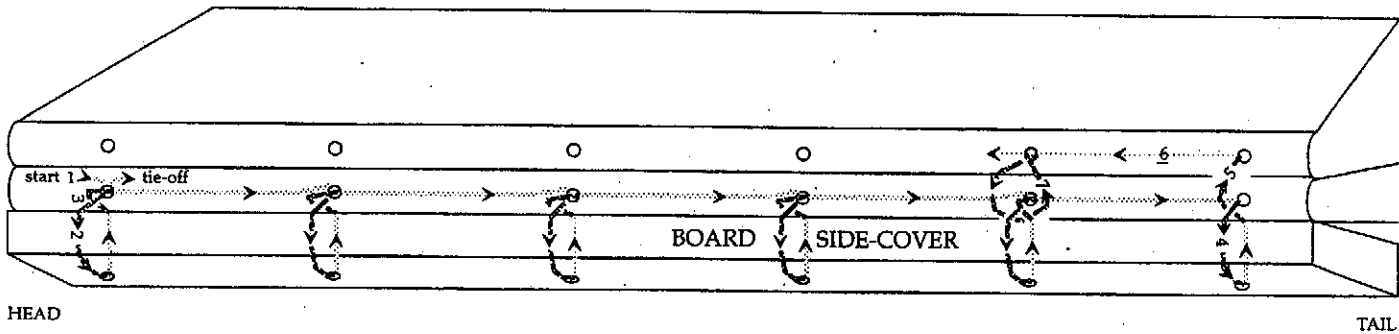


Starting the sewing at the head

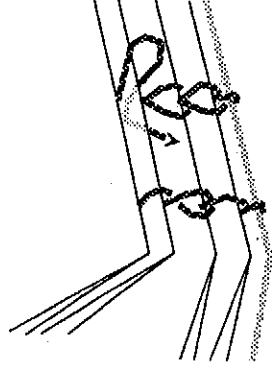


Continuing towards the tail

SEWING THE SECOND SECTION



Sewing on the Bench: This binding is an excellent example of the ease of sewing on the bench. Not only are both hands free to sew, but forming chains is much easier. If the book is sewn hand-held a curved needle must



be used to hook under the two threads of the previous section to form a chain. On the bench, simply lift the section being sewn and the previous. Slide the straight needle in and bring it out.

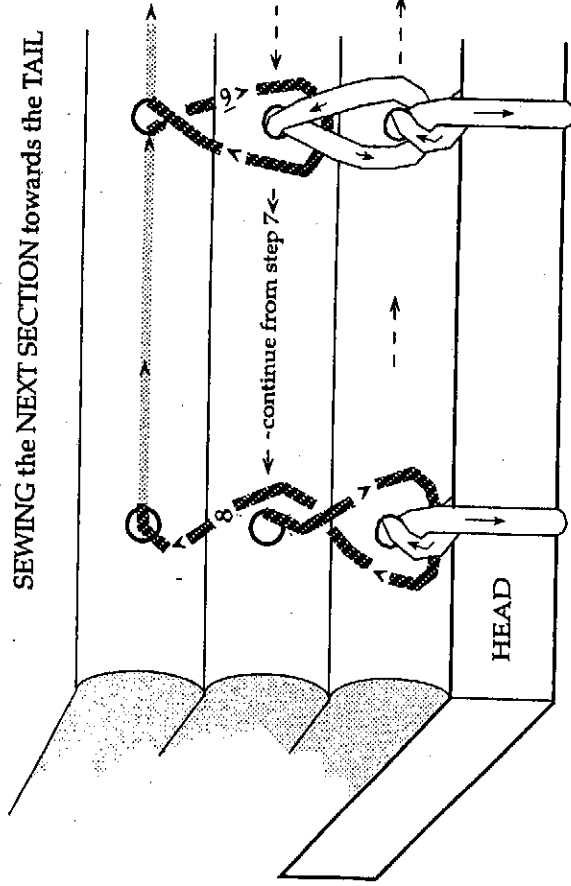
Sewing the Next Odd-Numbered Section towards the Tail:

8. Take the needle across the end station of first section, under the threads connecting board and first section, then under thread between first and second sections. Go into the sewing station nearest to the head of the new section.
9. Proceed inside the section to the next station. Take the needle to the outside.

Drop back across the spine, take the needle behind the threads connecting the two previous sections. Take the needle above the station, and slip behind the thread connecting the current and the previous adjacent section. Pull thread tight. Take the needle back into the station on the current section.

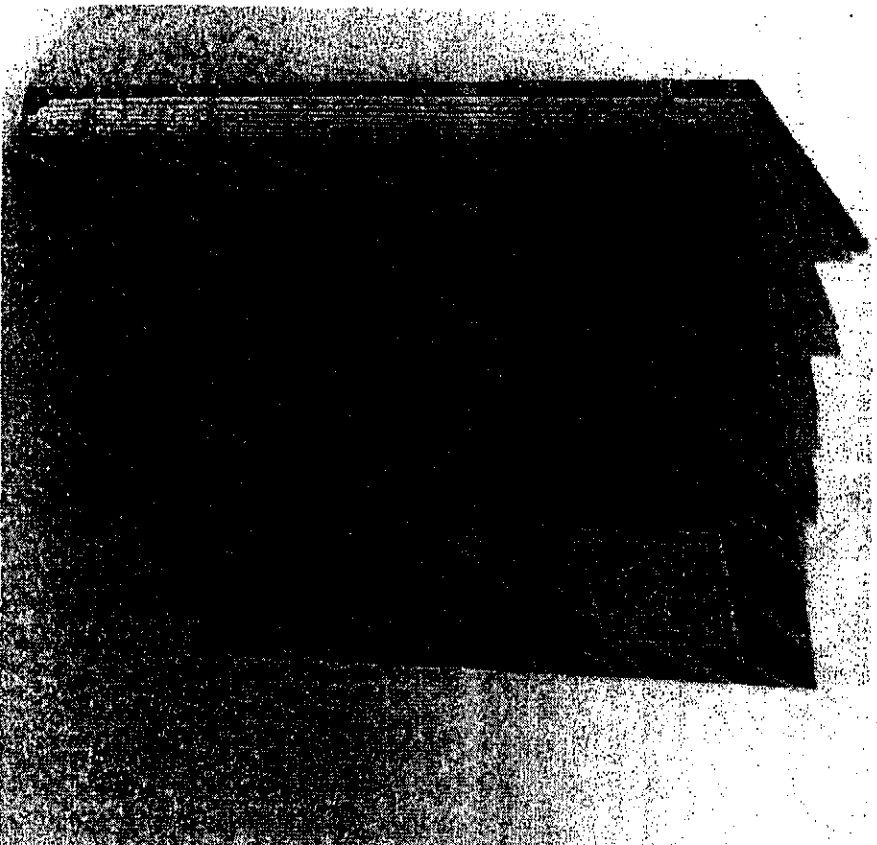
remaining stations on this section

Repeat step 9 until you have sewn all the stations of this section, but do not take the needle back into the end station of this section.



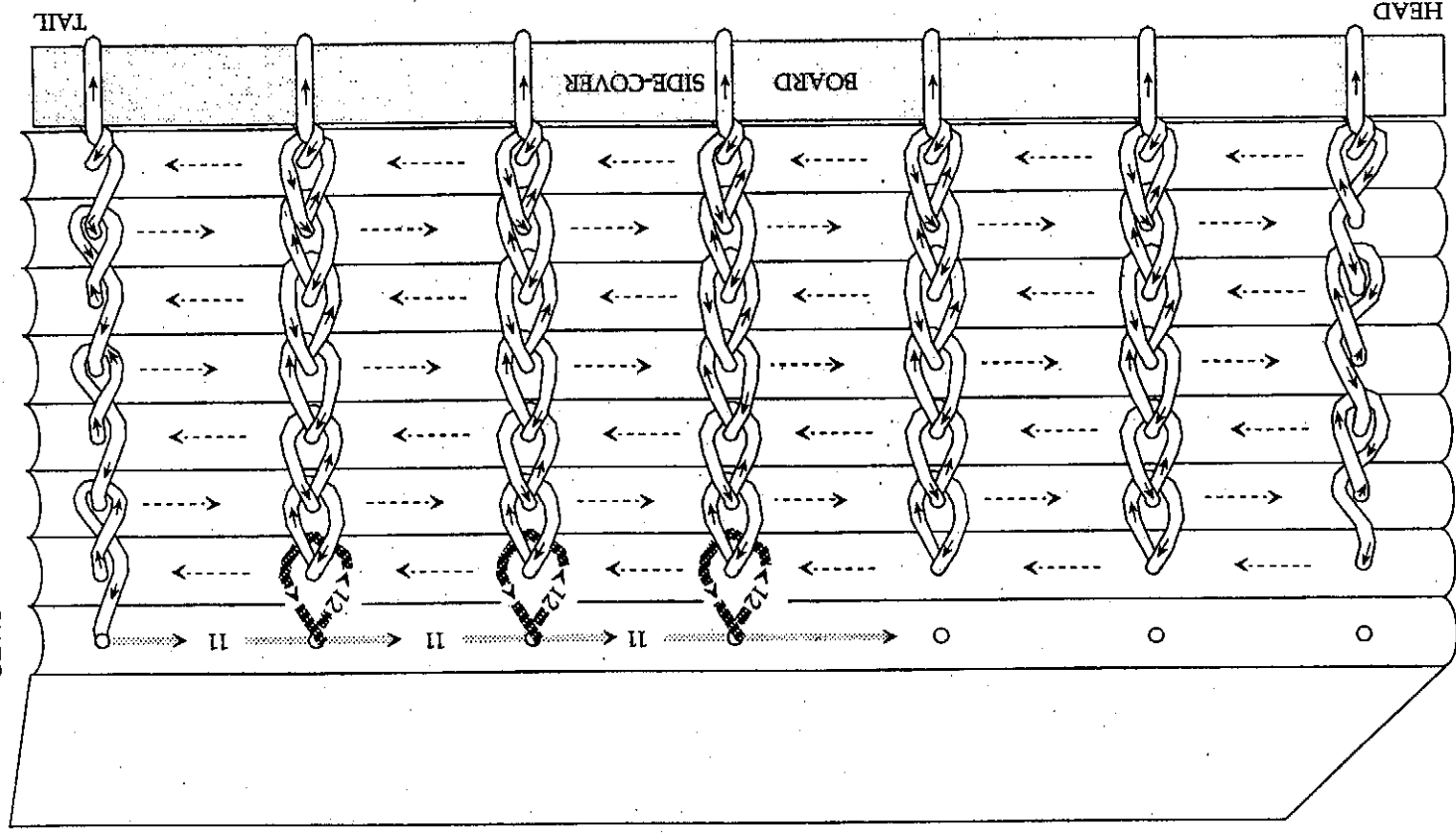
Sewing the Next Even-Numbered Section towards the Head:

10. Place the next section into position. Drop back to the station of previous section, go under both threads of the previously two connected sections. Slip under thread between previous and current section. Go into the station of the new section.
 11. Proceed inside the section to next station.
 12. Go to the outside. Drop back to the station of previous section, go under both threads of the previously two connected sections. Slip under thread between previous and current section. Go into the station of the current section. Pull thread tight. Take the needle back into the station on the current section.
remaining stations on this section
- Repeat steps 11 and 12 until you have sewn all the stations of this section, but do not take the needle back into the end station of this section.



Susan E. King, *Say, See, Borne: Lessons from French*, Paradise Press, 1988. Coptic binding with paste papers made by Susan King. Hand-bound by Shelley Hoyt.

SEWING the NEXT SECTION towards the HEAD



Sewing the Remainder of the Book Block: Alternate sewing sections towards the tail (steps 8 and 9) and towards the head (steps 10, 11, and 12). The final section is an exception. The other side-cover is sewn along with the stations on the final section.

Sewing the Final Section and the Board: If the book block has an even number of sections, the final section will be sewn starting at the tail. With an odd number of sections, sewing the final section starts at the head. The following description is for an even number of sections. The next to the last section was sewn. Steps 10, 11, and 12 were repeated, but the needle is not taken back into the end station of the next to the last section. Neither is the needle taken into the last section.

13. Set the final section in place. Proceed beyond the final section around the spine-edge of the cover. Take the needle through the outside of the cover to the inside. Pull thread through, and tighten the stitch from the next to the last section, extending across the peak of the final section to the cover.

14. Proceed up over the outside of this stitch, and take the needle down behind it, between the cover and the last section. Pull thread down to tighten the cover again.

15. Take the needle into the end station of the last section. Again, tighten the sections and the cover at this end station.

16. Proceed inside the section to the next station. Take the needle to the outside.

17. Proceed across the spine-edge to the outside of the cover. Take the needle through to inside of the cover, pulling the thread out beyond the spine. Tighten the stitch from the section to cover at this station.

18. Take the needle up under the thread that extends from section to cover at this sewing station. Cross over the final section above this station, taking the needle down between the next to last section and the third from the last, behind the thread that connects them. Pull thread down. Tighten the cover and last section at this station.

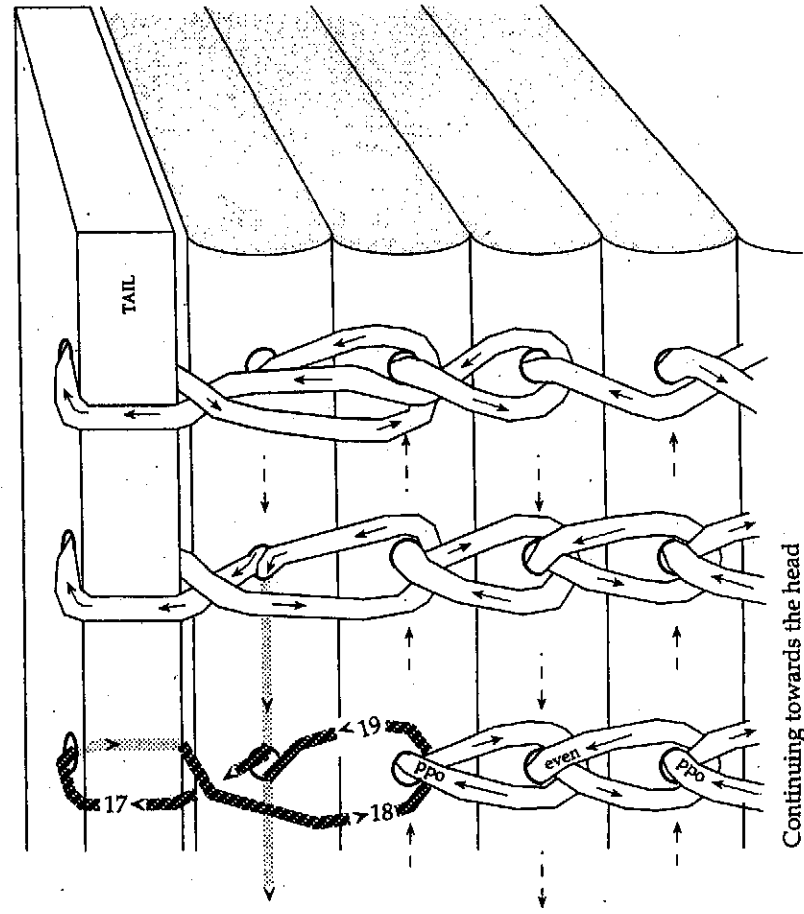
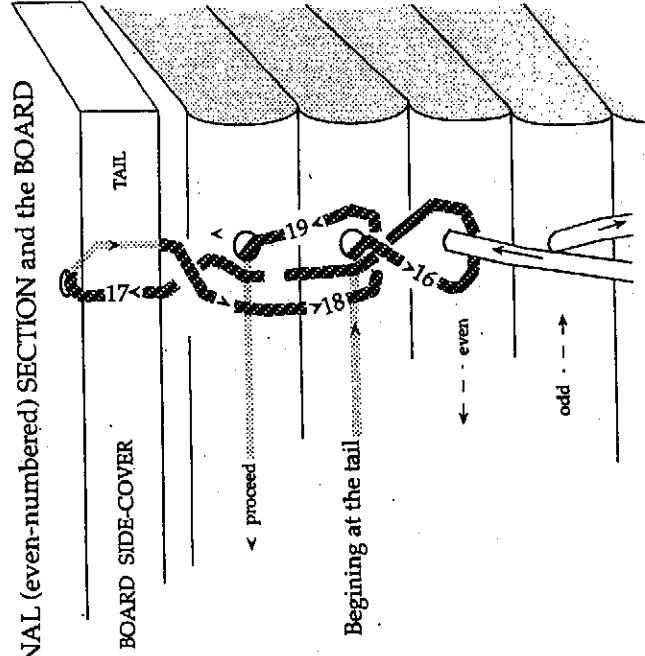
19. Take the needle into this station on the final section.

remaining stations on the final section and cover

Continue sewing the remaining stations by repeating steps 16, 17, 18 and 19.

At the final station when you complete step 19, taking the needle to the inside of the end station, tie a knot.

SEWING the FINAL (even-numbered) SECTION and the BOARD



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