

RESTORATION OF THE BOOK: THE FIRST LATVIAN TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE, Translated by Johann Ernst Glück (1689)

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DESCRIPTION BEFORE RESTORATION

Upon receiving the object for restoration, two main condition issues were identified: the covers were lost, and all sewing supports (cords) were broken in the middle of the binding. The book could not be opened or read. The lack of boards and fractured sewing supports led to the loss of a section of the text block. The sewing supports were torn or cut flush with the edge of the text block, and it was foreseeable that

the gatherings would begin to detach from the block when turning the leaves. The break in the supports prevented the opening of the text block, as doing so promoted further deterioration. It was impossible to determine the exact volume of the text block and the initial condition of the leaves prior to restoration. It should be noted that this binding possesses very good paper quality. However, the loss of

the covers had caused extensive mechanical damage to the leaves—creases, tears, and losses of material in varying degrees—intensified in the first and last leaves and along the outer edges of the entire text block. Based on how heavily the text block was covered in dust and surface dirt, it was evident that the book had been stored in this condition for a long period.

TREATMENT PROPOSAL

To straighten the spine break and mend the text block leaves. It was not deemed necessary to reconstruct the missing part of the text block or to create new covers.

RESTORATION PROCESS

Restoration began with the extension of the sewing supports. This was followed by various attempts to straighten the spine break. This proved to be a meticulous and iterative process, as achieving structural stability was difficult; the material consistently reverted to its initial orientation. After prolonged spine realignment, pressing, and the application of various methods, once the optimal result for that stage was achieved, mechanical cleaning was initiated. The spine of the document was vacuumed using a handheld vacuum and the text block leaves were cleaned. During cleaning, it was revealed that the first and last gatherings and several gatherings in the middle of the binding were partially or completely detached from the block. In the subsequent restoration

process, individual gatherings were repaired and pressed separately. They were then re sewn back into the text block structure. Once the mechanical cleaning of the text block was completed, the leaves were mended in situ using the “dry method”. In one session, covering one day, it was possible to mend 5–6 leaves, as the binding has a very tight and firm sewing structure. Wheat starch paste, Japanese tissue, and selected antique paper were used for mending. In parallel, realignment of the break continued, requiring occasional reinforcement and/or re-extension of the sewing supports. Upon completion of the mending, excess material generated during the gluing process was trimmed. Initially, the leaf corners were left sharp; however, after trimming the excess material

from all text block leaves, it was concluded that rounding the corners of the infilled areas was necessary. After the mending process was finished, the spine was lined using a lying press/finishing press. Since the break was nearly straightened, but there was a risk that it could return to its initial, “comfortable” broken state over time, a decision was made to line the spine with Japanese paper. Finally, a base performing a support function and appropriate covers were created for future storage.

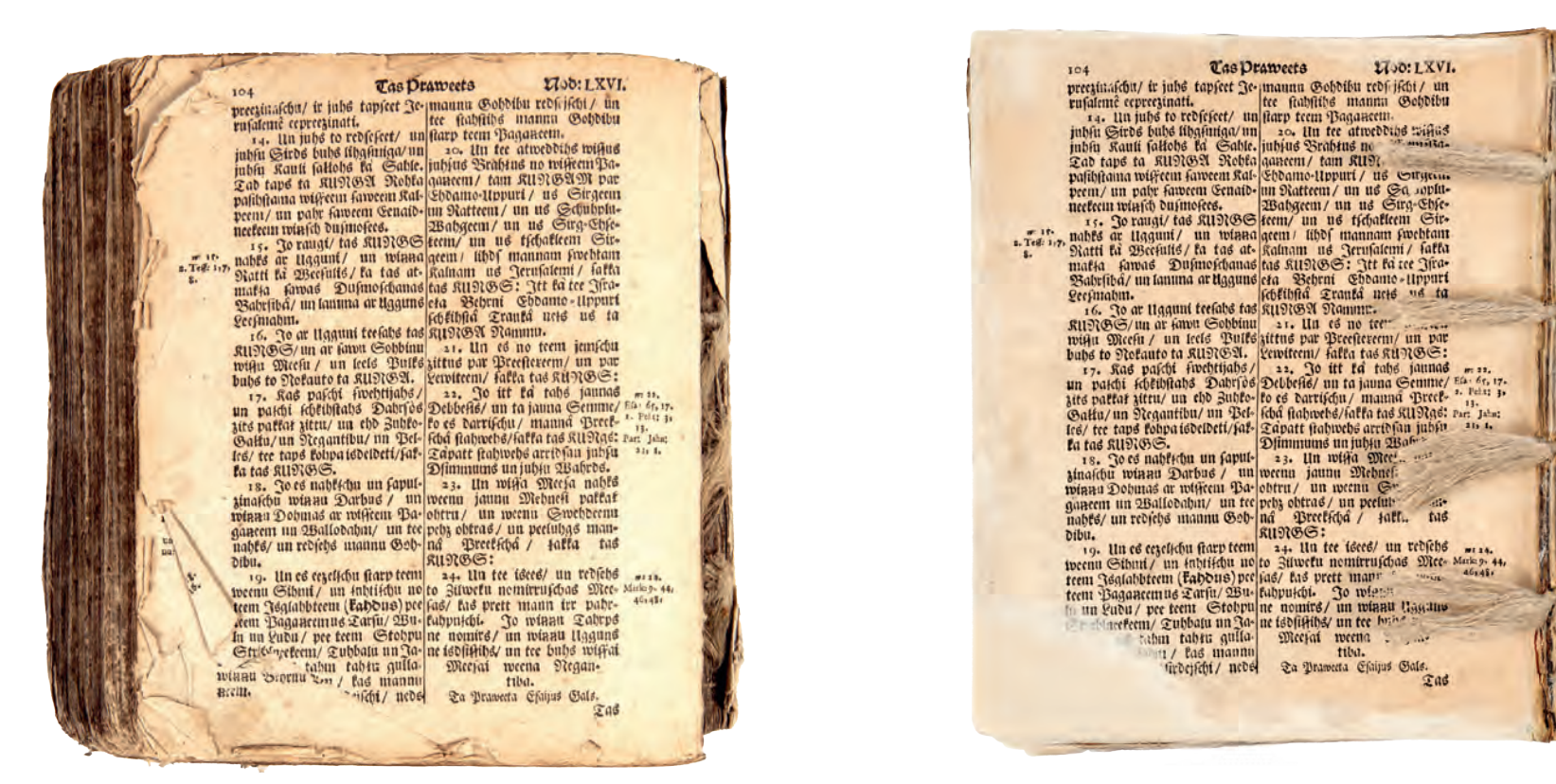
Total restoration duration: 1 year.

Photo:
Linda Dreimane, Roberts Kaniņš, O. Landa Lagzdīņa, Jānis Puķītis

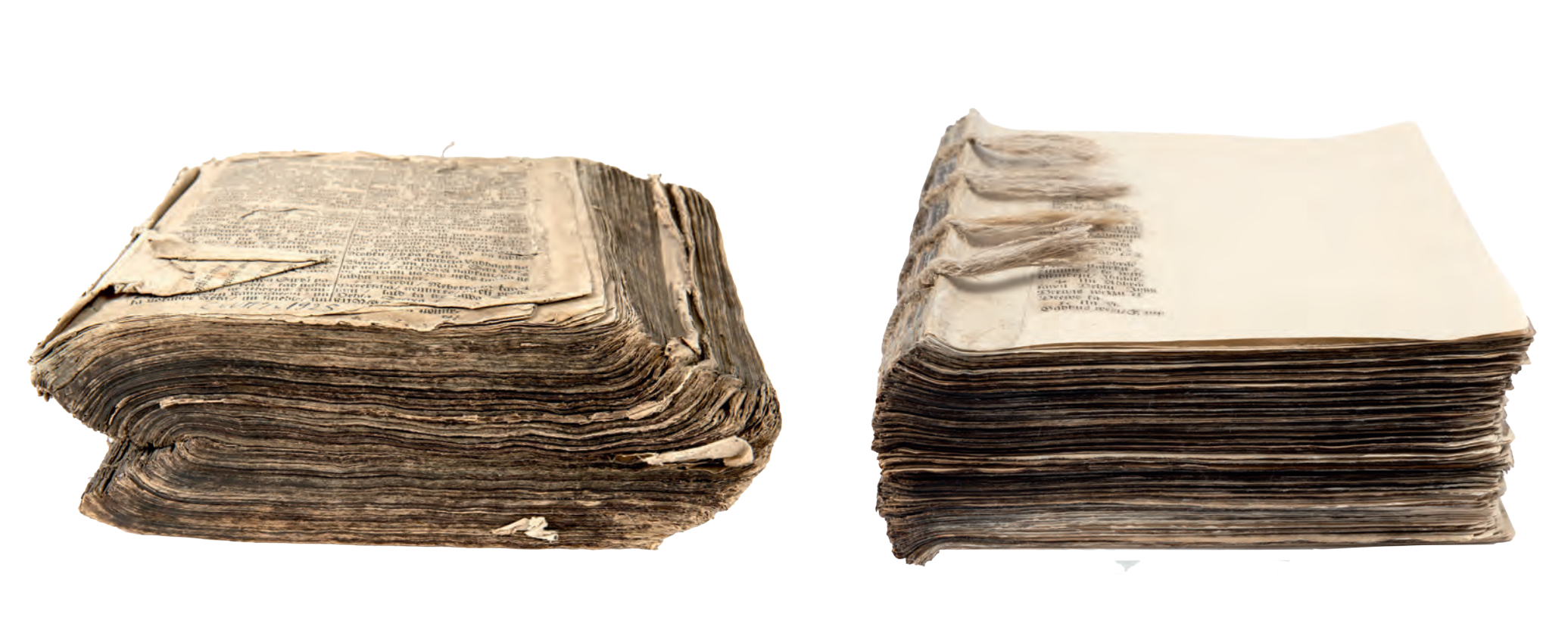
The first surviving leaf before and after restoration:



Verso/last surviving leaf before and after restoration:



Text block from the tail edge, before and after restoration:



Text block from the fore-edge, before and after restoration:



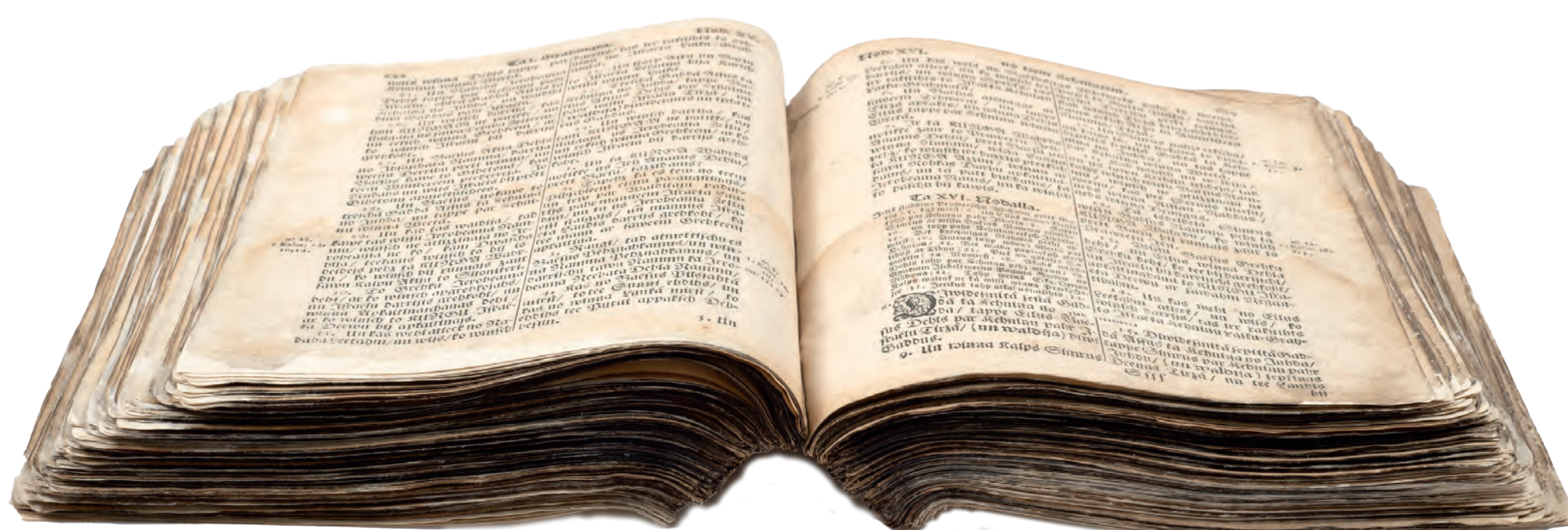
Text block from the spine side before and after restoration:



Binding from the spine and tail edge / ¾ view before and after restoration:



The book opened after restoration:



The binding during restoration, attempting to find a method to straighten the spine break:



The binding during restoration, with a portion of the leaves mended:



Book corners during restoration and after restoration:



The binding during restoration, reinforcing the sewing supports while continuing to realign the spine break:

