

In 1855 Stephen Austin produced his most distinctive book – an English translation of *Sakoontala* by Professor Monier-Williams. The Introduction makes reference to the printer: *‘As to the typography and general execution of the book, it would be unjust not to say that they are worthy of the increasing reputation of Mr Stephen Austin of Hertford, from whose press have issued some of the most perfect specimens of decorative Oriental printing that this country has ever produced’.*

This work was printed in up to five colours by letterpress, with the binding matching the richness of the interior. It consisted of an elaborate Oriental design blocked in gold on leather and one edition (the open copy shown) was remarkable as being one of very few commercial editions produced with goffered edges – not merely gilded but decorated with the impression of heated tools.

Stephen Austin was awarded gold medals by both Queen Victoria and the Empress of the French, following the ‘Exposition Universelle’, where the book was exhibited in Paris in 1856 and awarded a first-class Silver Medal by Le Jury International.