

CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE

Report of the first Conservation Sub-committee meetings held on 8 and 9 August 2006 at the Second Islamic Manuscript Conference, University of Cambridge, UK and subsequent communications from committee members.

Members present: Dr. Sudha Gopalakrishnan, Dr. Irina Katkova, Dr. Mandana Barkashli (Head), Dr. Zorina Kanapatskaya, Dr. Nuria Garaeva, Ms. Lesley Forbes, Mr. Paul Hepworth (Secretary) and Ms. Nil Baydar.

TIMA Action Items

All of the sub-committees were asked to:

- 1) find ways to encourage membership;
- 2) create a directory of specialists, research projects and training courses;
- 3) compile a list of standards, including guidelines and examples for best practice;
- 4) determine required research and identify gaps in knowledge.

1. Communication between Sub-committee Members

The committee wants to establish regular contact among its members and have each of them canvas colleagues and associates for others who might be interested in joining the association.

2. Directory of Specialists

A directory of committee members will be prepared. A directory of specialists in the conservation of Islamic manuscripts is a sensitive topic until we have identified what such specialists should know and the treatment guidelines the association wants to be seen to endorse. We felt that this topic should be deferred for further discussion. Committee members will be solicited to find out about research projects and training courses of which they are aware.

3. Conservation Standards

Similarly, it is early yet to compile a list of standards and guidelines and examples for best practice until committee members have had an opportunity to discuss conservation practices and issues more thoroughly--to consider how to sensitively bridge different approaches, educational backgrounds and philosophical points of view.

4. Sub-committee Projects

The following projects were identified as starting points for the committee this year:

- a. A committee of specialists on materials and techniques used in Islamic manuscripts will be established by Dr Mandana Barkeshli. This is to create a network of scholars and practitioners in the field and to initiate further research. Committee members will be asked to identify individual scholars/practitioners from their respective countries.
- b. Committee members will be asked to contribute to the bibliography on the conservation and materials of Islamic manuscripts that Paul Hepworth has assembled.
- c. The terminology used to describe Islamic manuscripts and their conservation treatment will be assembled in different languages, so as to facilitate the accurate description of these manuscripts and promote effective communication between conservators who are using different languages in preparing condition and treatment reports.
- d. Simple techniques for imaging the characteristics of Islamic paper (e.g. laid and chain lines, mould marks, etc.) will be researched. The hope is that a half-day or one-day workshop can be created for use at future association conferences to demonstrate how libraries and collections can easily and consistently generate this data, which can then be put into an accessible database.
- e. A list of the problems and issues faced in the conservation of Islamic manuscripts will be started.
- f. A list of research priorities will be started to guide PhD and MA students who want to pursue this area of study.
- g. Workshops on Islamic manuscript conservation will be designed. The hope is to create an educational unit in which a particularly useful conservation skill or technique is taught that would be made available to member institutions of the association.

An additional project was proposed after the committee meetings:

- h. Jawi, a less appreciated script/language of Southeast Asia is an important member of the body of the Islamic script/languages. Preservation of this important source of Islamic manuscripts is regarded as a priority in the region. A project initiated by Prof. Dr. Amir H. Zekrgoo aims at the identification of Jawi manuscripts and the compilation of a related bibliography. Committee members will be asked to contribute.

Paul Hepworth
5 September 2006