

HELEN LOVEDAY

19 Georgian House

10 Bury Street

London

SW1Y 6AA

+44 (0)20 7930 0180

**Illustrated Shahnama on Paper; c.1430 AD
34ff, containing 25 illustrations**

Serial Number: MS 22 - 1948

Conservation Report

December 2009

Description of Manuscript:

Original Paper: A dark cream, laid paper, constructed on a grass mould, the latter containing 7 – 8 laid lines per centimetre, with no chain lines apparent. The paper is sized, burnished, and moderately crisp.

Additional Papers: Inlays and interleaving folios are of Western European origin, both constructed on laid moulds, containing 8 laid lines to the centimetre, with chain lines distributed at regular intervals.

Collation: 34 numbered folios arranged in quires of 8 folios per quire, with additional interleaving leaves between all.

Dimensions: Bound manuscript: 260 x 190 x 28mm.

Binding: 18th century binding, with a later re-backing.

Summary of Condition:

The textblock was in a poor physical condition. All original folios had been extensively trimmed, and had been inlayed within new margins constructed of strips of a later Western European laid paper. The nature of the margins, and the manner in which they had been adhered to the original, had promoted cockling of the original, and resulted in poorly flexing folios that could not be handled without risk of further damage to their form. As a direct consequence of their trimming, most folios had lost their original titles, the latter having being replaced by later headings in red pigment; this was with the exception of folios 11, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 25, where squares of black script bordered in gold were adhered to the margins.

The original 15th century paper had suffered considerable damage as a consequence of the extensive use of a copper based pigment (possibly verdigris) within its illustrations and pages of

illumination. The corrosive action of this pigment had resulted in substantial fracture and loss of the cellulose fibres, the most severe instances occurring on folios 21, 23, 26 and 32. Throughout the textblock, this damage, and all other tears and losses, had been repaired with a mixture of paper patch repairs and self-adhesive tape. In some areas, major areas of loss had been infilled and subsequently retouched.

Over and above the physical damaged as described, all folios had a high quantity of loose particulate on their surface, and most contained sporadic areas of staining, ink smudging, and ingrained dirt caused by general handling, and typical of a manuscript of this age.

Conservation Aims:

With regard to the conservation of the original 15th century folios, the aim of conservation was clear: to promote their physical and chemical stability through a reduction in all loose particulate dirt, and the removal of all later inlays and patch repairs, thereby facilitating their full physical support and consolidation. It was recommended that the latter should involve the repair and infill of all areas of fracture and loss with toned Japanese repair tissues, adhered with wheat starch paste; where appropriate, infills should be toned further with watercolour in order to reduce their impact on the overall appearance of the folio.

For the sake of stability and ease of handling, it was proposed that all folios be re-inlayed with a toned Japanese paper, of similar weight and flexibility to the original. Thereafter, all should be mounted individually within bespoke acid-free mounts, prior to housing them within two drop-back boxes, one of which would also contain the 18th century binding. As such the folios would be treated as single entities, prepared for exhibition whenever required, and housed in such a manner that direct handling and flexing would be kept to a minimum, with the risk of further damage to their form reduced substantially. For ease of access, all mounts should be numbered, with a list of the numbered folios, including a description of their contents, to be adhered within the lid of each drop-back box.

Summary of Contents

Folio	Description	Area of Particular Concern
1v	Illuminated Carpet Page	Smudging of ink; substantial former patch repairs.
2- 5	Text only	
6v	Illustration	
7	Text only	
8v-9r	Illuminated Carpet Pages	
10v	Illustration	
11v	Illustration	
12v	Illustration	
13v	Illustration	
14v	Illustration	
15v	Illustration	
16v	Illustration	
17v	Illustration	
18v	Illustration	
19v	Illustration	
20v	Illustration	
21v	Illustration	Severe corrosion and loss within stylised rocks.
22v	Illustration	
23v	Illustration	Severe corrosion of waves; recent loss evident.
24r&v	Illuminated Carpet Page	
25v	Illustration	
26v	Illustration	Severe corrosion of mountains; recent loss evident.
27v	Illustration	Severe corrosion of kneeling figure and horseman.
28v	Illustration	
29v	Illustration	
30v	Illustration	
31v	Illustration	
32v	Illustration	Severe corrosion of carpet; recent loss evident.
33v	Illustration	
34v	Illustration	

Summary of Conservation

1. Disbinding of volume, including the removal of all interleaving folios, and involving a full assessment of the physical condition of all folios.

2. All folios:
 - (a) Removal of all former margins following the introduction of moisture to their adhesive layer via a sodium carboxy-methyl-cellulose poultice, applied to the surface of the applied margins.
 - (b) Reduction of loose particulate dirt affecting the original paper through the gentle application of a dry, chemically inert latex sponge to areas of text and illumination.
 - (c) Where necessary, support of areas of extreme fragility using facing tissues adhered to the surface of the illustration with a weak, reversible solution of methyl-cellulose. The facing tissues serve to stabilize areas of severe instability whilst any patch repairs are removed from their reverse side (see below)
 - (d) Where appropriate,*removal of former patch repairs and self-adhesive strips through a combination of poultice treatments (as above), and the use of ultrasonic steam, in order to introduce moisture to affected areas under controlled conditions.

* Where a decision has been made not to remove a former repair, this has been due to the fact that the removal of the repair would cause more damage than would be promoted through its retention.
 - (e) Repair and infill of all areas of fracture and loss with toned Japanese repair tissues, adhered with wheat starch paste.
 - (f) Further in-situ toning of infills with watercolour in order to reduce the impact of their presence within the folio.
 - (g) Application of new, Japanese paper inlays to all folios. This procedure is undertaken following the gentle ultrasonic humidification of the folios in order to reduce the potential for cockling on drying.

helenlovedayconservation@btinternet.com