

John “Jake” Benson

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Education

Leiden University. Leiden, The Netherlands. *May 2016–Completion Expected May 2020*

Ph.D. Candidate, Persian Studies

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Gabrielle van den Berg; Prof. Dr. Petra Sijpesteijn

Dissertation: *The Art of Abrī: The Advent, Evolution, and Impact of Early Modern Turco-Persianate Paper Marbling.*

University of Maryland, College Park. College Park, Maryland. *Fall 2007–Summer 2012*

Graduate Persian Flagship Scholar

Graduate certificate awarded by the Graduate Persian Flagship Program. August 2012

Persian Studies major, Undergraduate Persian Flagship Scholar, and Art History and Middle East Studies minors.

Bachelor of Arts degree awarded by the College of Arts & Humanities. December 2010

North Bennet Street School. Boston, Massachusetts *Fall 1993–Spring 1995*

A two-year program in hand bookbinding, restoration, and conservation, primarily focused on bench work.

Certificate awarded June 1995.

Arabic Language Unit, American University in Cairo. Cairo, Egypt *Spring 1987–Spring 1988*

Elementary and intermediate Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian colloquial dialect, lived with host family.

Academic Fellowships

Theodore Rousseau Fellowship *2018–2019*

Awarded by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to support research on paper marbling in collections abroad.

Getty Research Institute Library Fellowship *May, 2018*

Examined *alba amicorum* held in GRI Library’s Special Collections and research in the general collections.

Eleanor M. Garvey Fellowship in Printing and Graphic Arts *2017–2018*

Support for one month’s research on marbled papers at Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

Netherlands Institute in Turkey Fellowship (NIT) *October, 2017*

Residency at NIT, hosted by Koç University’s Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED).

American Institute for Iranian Studies (AIIRs) Pre-Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship *Fall, 2017*

Travel grant awarded for dissertation research on marbled manuscripts for two months in Turkey.

Professional Experience

Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation & Dar al-Kutub Manuscript Project (TIF-DAK). Cairo, Egypt

Curator & Senior Conservator

March 2012–March 2016

- Researched manuscripts for exhibition, composed captions and panels, trained library staff.
- Provided emergency response after a bomb attack on January 24th, 2014.
- Cleaned, rehoused, and cataloged more than 2,200 detached bookbindings, including medieval fragments.

Benson’s Hand Bindery. Columbia, SC and Takoma Park, MD

Sole Proprietor

October 2000–March 2012

- Self-employed conservator treating rare books, documents and objects made of leather, cloth and paper.

McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park. College Park, MD

Library Technician II, Metadata Services Department (MSD)

February–October 2011

- Copy cataloging and provisional original cataloging of Persian-language monographs.
- Cataloged the Iranian Political History Collection; wrote a preliminary bilingual finding aid.

The Walters Art Museum. Baltimore, MD

Manuscript Conservation Internship

September–December 2009

- Advanced training in Islamic manuscript conservation techniques under Abigail Quandt.

Etherington Conservation Center (Now ECS Conservation). Greensboro, NC

Assistant Conservator, promoted to Conservator

April 1996–August 2000

- Treated books and paper items of significant value for private and institutional collections nationwide.
- Trained library staff treating of the Hassan Fathy collection at the American University in Cairo.

Conservation Office, Library of Congress. Washington, DC

Advanced Rare Book Conservation Intern

September 1995–April 1996

- Treated several 18th century books from the Thomas Jefferson Collection and one incunabulum.

Langdell Library, Harvard Law School. Cambridge, MA

Special Collections Intern

October 1993–June 1995

- Completed a preservation survey and constructed boxes for the Rare Book and Manuscript divisions.

Publications

Book Chapters:

“The *Qīta* ‘āt-i *Khūsh Khaṭṭ* Album: Authenticity and Provenance,” in *Iran and the Deccan: Persianate Art, Culture, and Talent in Circulation, ca. 1400–1700*, edited by Keelan Overton. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming, 2020).

Co-authored with Keelan Overton. “Deccani Seals and Notations: Sources for the Study of Indo-Persian Book Arts and Collecting, c. 1400-1680,” in *Empires of the Near East and India: Sources for the Study of the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal Societies*. Edited by Hani Khafipour. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

“The Art of *Abri*: Marbled Album leaves, Drawings and Paintings of the Deccan,” in *Sultans of Deccan India 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy*, edited by Navina Haidar & Marika Sardar. 15759. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015).

“Satisfying an Appetite for Books: Innovation, Production, and Modernization in Later Islamic Bookbinding,” in *Persian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures: New Leaves, Fresh Looks*, edited by Kamran Talatoff. 365–394. London: Routledge, 2015.

Translations:

With Kimia Maleki, translation of Hamidreza Ghelichkhani’s *Khalilullah, Padishah of the Pen*, in *Iran and the Deccan: Persianate Art, Culture, and Talent in Circulation, ca. 1400–1700*, edited by Keelan Overton. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming, 2020).

“Appendix: *Vaqfnama* of Ibrahim Qutb Shah (r. 1550-80) in Qur’an Manuscript no. 106 Mashhad, Astan-i Quds-i Razavi Library,” in *Iran and the Deccan: Persianate Art, Culture, and Talent in Circulation, ca. 1400–1700*, edited by Keelan Overton. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming, 2020).

“Appendix: Text of a pamphlet of bookbinding resolutions dated AH 1278/1862 CE,” in *Persian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures: New Leaves, Fresh Looks*, edited by Kamran Talatoff. 384; 387–89 (London: Routledge, 2015).

Articles:

Co-authored with Ali Mahmudabad, Matt Miller, and Columba Stewart. “The Raja of Mahmudabad Palace Library Project.” *Shi‘i Studies Review*, 3 (2019): 271–79.

“Curious Colors of Currency: Security Marbling on Financial Instruments during the Long Eighteenth Century.” *American Journal of Numismatics*, 31. (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2019).

“A Brief History, and Possible Origin of the Schrotel Pattern.” *Society of Marbling Annual*, (2006): 7–10.

“Historical References to Marbling in East Asia.” *Society of Marbling Annual*. (2004): 20–27.

“Etherington Conservation Center Treats the Archives of Noted Egyptian Architect Hassan Fathy.” *New Library Binding Scene*. 19:1 (Spring, 2000).

“A Moldy Mess: Treatment of Water Damaged Books from the Collection of Pope Clement XI.” *The Title Page* (Fall, 1997): 3.

Reviews:

“Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World by Jonathan Bloom.” *Hand Papermaking*. 17:2 (Winter, 2002): 46–47.

Presentations & Lectures

- Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, Cairo, Egypt** February 7th, 2018
“*The Advent and Early Development of Paper Marbling in the Islamic World.*”
- Netherlands Institute in Turkey, Istanbul, Turkey** October 31st, 2017
“*The Advent and Early Development of Paper Marbling in the Islamic World.*”
- Regionality: Looking for the Local in the Arts of Islam Historians of Islamic Art Assn 5th Biennial Symposium**
The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. October 20th–October 22nd, 2016
“The *Qiṭ‘āt-i Khūshkhaṭṭ* Album (University of Edinburgh, Ms. Or. 373)” and *Abrī* of Muhammad Tahir.”
- The Timurid Period: Cultural Production, Exchange and Legacies**
Leiden University, the Netherlands May 26th–27th, 2016
“Decorated Papers in Timurid and Later Manuscript Cultures.”
- 6th International Ebru Congress**
Ümraniye Belediyesi, Istanbul, Turkey May 7th–14th, 2016
“*Naqsh bar Āb*: Marbled Paper as a Trope in Persian Poetry.”
- Manuscript Cultures of the Ottoman Empire**
Orient Institut, Istanbul, Turkey June 6th–7th, 2014
“Satisfying an Appetite for Books: Ottoman *Çahârkūşe* Bindings.”
- International Society of Iranian Studies 10th Biennial Conference**
Montréal, Canada August 6th–9th, 2014
“*Naqsh Bar Āb*: Marbled Paper as a Trope in Persian Poetry.”
- International Ebru History Symposium**
Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey December 6th, 2013
“*Naqsh bar Āb*: Persian Textual Sources Concerning the Art of Marbling.”
- Looking Widely; Looking Closely,
Historians of Islamic Art Association 3rd Biennial Symposium**
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. October 17th–19th, 2012
“*Naqsh Bar Āb*: Safavid Marbled Papers of the Late 16th to Early 17th centuries.”
- International Society of Iranian Studies 9th Biennial Conference**
Istanbul, Turkey August 1st–4th, 2012
“*Naqsh Bar Āb*: The Exchange of Paper Marbling Techniques Between India, Iran, and Turkey.”
- The Islamic Manuscript Association 7th Annual Conference**
University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK July 12th–14th, 2011
“From *Tahbīk wa Tashbīk* to *Pīrāza o Shīrāza*: Primary Textual Sources on Islamic Endband Sewing.”
- Conference on Codicology of Manuscripts of the Arabic Script**
Madrid, Spain. May 19th–21st, 2010
“Satisfying an Appetite for Books: Innovation, Production, & Modernization in Later Islamic Bookbinding.”

Memberships

- Historians of Islamic Art Association (HIAA) 2008–present
The Islamic Manuscripts Association (TIMA) 2011–present
Association for Iranian Studies (AIS) 2011–present
Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) 2012–present
Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (RAS) 2013–present
Guild of Book Workers (GBW) 2014–present

Foreign Languages

- Persian:** Fluent in Modern Iranian Persian and Tajik dialects; translation of historical literature.
Arabic: Advanced-level fluency in Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial Cairene Egyptian dialect.
Turkish: Intermediate modern Turkish; reading knowledge of Ottoman, Chagatai, and Uzbek.
French: Basic reading comprehension, bibliographic knowledge, and speaking skills.