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Minimal Intervention During Conservation of Medieval Codices in Order to Preserve their Original Structure

Content and Objectives of the Lecture and Group Work on the Lecture Topic:

Ethics in the Conservation of Medieval Codices. Minimal Intervention in Order to Preserve Their Original Structure

The long work with medieval codices directs the conservator towards a more complex approach and understanding of the objects’ unique entity as a whole, synthesis of knowledge and art. The conservation ethics requires respect to the aesthetical and historical significance as well as to the physical integrity of the book. The conservation treatment has to take into account the complex nature of the codex – information carrier, work of art, but also a utility object, and aim to preserve all these characteristics. The conservation ethics requires the use of reversible materials and techniques that will not damage the original substance as well as thorough documentation of the undertaken treatments and employed materials to enable an adequate future treatment if such necessity arises. Another part of the conservator’s responsibility is to look after the conditions under which the manuscripts are stored and used. Our observations in several manuscripts collections from the Balkans revealed the conservation approaches used in the past and further convinced us in the importance of the minimal intervention in order to preserve the original structure of the medieval codex.

Readings:

Adam (1890) Adam, Paul: Der Bucheinband: seine Technik und seine Geschichte, Leipzig, Verlag E. A. Seeman, 1890

