

LOOKING BACK A THOUSAND YEARS...

THE “APOLLONIUS PROJECT” – THE FACSIMILE OF THE *HISTORIA APOLLONII REGIS TYRI* MANUSCRIPT AND THE ACCOMPANYING VOLUME OF RESEARCH PAPERS IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN



One of the oldest manuscripts in the National Széchényi Library (Cod. Lat. 4) contains a late antique adventure novel, *The Story of Apollonius, the King of Tyre*, which enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages and the early Modern Age. Among others, the rich plot inspired Shakespeare's *Pericles*. The text preserved in the manuscript is one of the oldest and most significant relics of the novel's variants. Although the manuscript deserves special attention for several reasons, it has been practically unknown even to professionals.

The manuscript written on parchment dates back to around 1000, the year full of expectations, and reflects a colourful Europe and the duality of tradition and revival in the sense that it adapts the antique traditions to the spirit of Christianity. It was copied in a Benedictine monastery: in Werden an der Ruhr in the area of the Cologne archdiocese. The manuscript contains 38 uncoloured pen drawings, making it the earliest extant illustrated copy of the novel that we know of. The drawings carry several features of the already lost late antique illustration cycle, while having a special place in the history of secular narrative cartoons, as well as in the book culture of the age that served primarily ecclesiastical purposes.

As far as the history of the manuscript is concerned, next to the drawings there are the German names of a number of former users, given in 11th and 12th century transcriptions. They are invaluable not only in

informing us of the history of the document, but also give us insights into language history, and the reception, use and function of the manuscript. Up to the second half of the 15th century, the manuscript is most likely to have been kept in the Werden monastery, from where it went into the possession of a professor in Cologne. By the 18th century the latest, it was already owned by the Sopron Evangelical Convent, which in 1814 donated it to the National Széchényi Library.

The manuscript is a shared cultural treasure of the united Europe. Therefore, in order to offer the interested public a picture of the whole piece, a volume of commentaries and studies accompanies the facsimile edition of the eight-page manuscript. In addition to issuing the variant of the text preserved in the manuscript, there are papers by six renowned authors from different disciplines, with acknowledged foreign scholars among them, introducing the history of the document, its significance in art history and the linguistic peculiarities of its text. The papers in the supplementary volume in English and German supported by plenty of visuals ensure that the book will find the place it deserves in the professional world and that it will eventually be a lasting part of our collective European memory.

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