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## Preserving the Original Structure of the Medieval Codex During Conservation\*

### Abstract

The objective of this paper is to contribute to the change in attitude of specialists and the general public towards the restoration of medieval codices, by promoting the contemporary tendency for minimal intervention. Unfortunately this tendency is still not appreciated enough in the conservation practice in Southeast Europe. Our observations are based on work with Greek and Slavic manuscripts from the Balkans. During the conservation of manuscripts, we aspire to preserve the main codicological characteristics and the original construction of the book. For this purpose it is necessary to preserve the binding and its elements:

- the sewing of the book body (usually link-stitch sewing)
- the board attachment methods
- the endbands and markers
- the leather covering of the bindings and its decoration
- metal furnishings
- fastenings.

However the desire to protect the book from rebinding often is in conflict with the need for its use by readers and researchers. As part of the conservation measures, we suggest the making of movable covers and boxes, digitisation of the manuscripts to reduce their handling and the maintaining of optimal storage conditions.

The Ivan Duichev Center for Slavo-Byzantine Studies, at the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, holds one of the biggest manuscript collections in Bulgaria, with more than 700 Greek, Slavic and Islamic codices

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and fragments dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of them have their original bindings preserved.

Since 2005 the Center is a partner of the Vestigia Manuscript Research Center.