

INTRODUCTION

EDITORIAL NOTE

The papers published in the first and second fasciculi of AAHung vol. (2008) are the written versions of the lectures presented at “The Archimedes Palimpsest Colloquium” held at the Eötvös Collegium, Budapest, 18–22 September 2007.

Due to the prominence of the international conference, the significance of the Archimedes Palimpsest itself and its new text the editors deemed it useful to present a handful of related documents as Introduction and Appendix.

The organisers of the Conference would like to express their gratitude especially to the anonymous Owner of the Palimpsest, Will Noel, Director of the Archimedes Project, P. E. Easterling, FBA, and E. W. Handley, FBA for their support and immense help without which neither the Colloquium nor this volume could have come to existence.

A SHORT HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON THE ARCHIMEDES PALIMPSEST

A book buried in the ocean of history surfaced like a crate from a wrecked ship in the summer of 1906 at the Metochion of the Holy Sepulchre, in Constantinople. The distinguished philologist Johan Ludwig Heiberg started to unpack it. It was a thirteenth-century Byzantine prayerbook, a Euchologion, but it was palimpsest. Hidden beneath the prayers Heiberg discovered the oldest surviving manuscript of the works of Archimedes in Greek by five hundred years, and the unique source for two of his treatises – the Method and the Stomachion. This would become Codex C in Heiberg's critical edition of the works of Archimedes, published by Teubner in three volumes, from 1910–1915. As well as the Archimedes manuscript, other erased texts were in the book, but they were extremely difficult to read, and Heiberg did not pay them much attention except to note that he transcribed a short passage from one, for which he could not find a parallel in the existing corpus of Greek literature. Shortly thereafter history again overwhelmed the book. In the events following the First World War, the manuscript disappeared from the Metochion, and eventually ended up in a private French collection, largely inaccessible to scholarship.

The book did not surface again until 2pm on 29 October 1998, when it appeared, much damaged, on the auction block at Christie's, New York. It immediately entered another private collection, but this time its fate was different. The private owner of the book deposited it at The Walters Art Museum, in Baltimore, in the United States, and agreed to fund an integrated programme of conservation, imaging, and scholarship to fully unpack its secrets. At the time of the auction, the book was considered a write-off; its condition was so poor, and the reputation of Heiberg so high, that most considered it a relic rather than an object that would reward much further research. Ten years later, this same prayerbook was revealed as a small library of unique ancient texts.

The book was disbound by Abigail Quandt at The Walters Art Museum. This revealed text that had been hidden from Heiberg in the gutter of the book, and allowed for modern imaging techniques to be applied to the folios. Multispectral imaging was conducted on the manuscript by Roger Easton, Keith Knox, and William Christens-Barry, and X-Ray fluorescence imaging by Uwe Bergmann and Robert Morton. Nigel Wilson and Reviel Netz transcribed the Archimedes texts in this new light, and were able to improve upon the results of Heiberg. Natalie Tchernetska identified five bifolia in the manuscript as speeches by the attic orator Hyperides, and Netz, Robert Sharples and Marwan Rashed working collaboratively identified what may well be fragments of Alexander of Aphrodisias's Commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*.

As the full significance of the prayerbook became apparent, so the project expanded. It now involves many scholars, and many imaging scientists from around the world, all working collaboratively to extract as much information as possible from the codex. And it is in this context that a Colloquium at the Eötvös Collegium of the University of Budapest was held in September of 2007. László Horváth, leader of