

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER - NOMINATION FORM

The Mashtots Matenadaran Ancient Manuscripts Collection

PART A - ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. Identity and Location

1.1 Name of documentary heritage: The Mashtots Matenadaran Ancient Manuscripts collection

1.2 Country: Republic of Armenia

1.3 State, province or region: -

1.4 Address: Mashtots Av. N53, YEREVAN 9, Armenia

1.5 Name of organization or institution: Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts

2. Legal Information

2.1 Owner: Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Sen S. AREVSHATIAN, Director)

2.2 Custodian: Armen MALKHASIAN, Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts

2.3 Legal status

(a) category of ownership: Public

(b) details of legal & administrative provisions for the preservation of the doc. heritage: -

(c) accessibility: Limited

(d) copyright status: Copyright belongs to the Institute

2.4 Responsible administration: The Institute

3. Identification

3.1 Description and inventory

The Mashtots Matenadaran, an Institute of Scientific Research on Ancient Manuscripts, named after the immortal creation of the Armenian alphabet in 405 and founder of the Armenian school Mesrop Mashtots is situated on one of the north-west scenic hills of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The collection of approximately 17,000 manuscripts includes almost every sphere of Armenian ancient and medieval science and culture - history, geography, philosophy, grammar, law, medicine, mathematics, literature, miniature and others, as well as manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Syrian, Latin, Ethiopian, Indian, Japanese, etc.

3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

Efforts conducted by the Matenadaran specialists since 1959 have enabled them to publish more than two hundred books, among them there are valuable Armenian sets of works, as well as volumes of the scientific periodical "Banber Matenadaran" (Herald of the Matenadaran). As an aid to scholars, volumes 1 and 2 of the brief Catalogue of the Armenian Manuscripts in the Matenadaran were published in 1965 and 1970, containing detailed indexes of contents, colophons, fragments, as well as lists of names of toponyms. In the course of the last two decades, the Matenadaran has published a great number of old Armenian literary monuments, among which especially noteworthy are the "hishatakarans" (colophons of Armenian manuscripts); volumes of short chronicles and Persian Fimans (Decrees); works of old Armenian historians - Koriun (5th century), Eghisheh (5th century), Sebeos (7th century), Hovhannes

Mamikonian (7th century), Kirakos Gandzaketsi (13th century), "History of Georgia" (Kartlis Tskhovrebah); the Armenian translations of a few Greek authors - Theon of Alexandria (1st century), Zeno, Hermes Trismegistus (3rd century); works of Armenian philosophers - Davit Anhaght (5th-6th century), Hovhan Vorotnetsi (14th century), Grigir Tatevatsi (14th century); works of the medieval poets - Hovhannes Erzingatsi (13th-14th century), Khachatur echaretsi (14th century), Martiros Krimetsi (17th century), Naghash Hovnatan (18th century), Paghtasar Dpir (18th cent.), etc.

3.3 Visual documentation, if appropriate (for example, photographs or a video of the documentary heritage): –

3.4 History

This treasure has a centuries-long history, the nucleus of its manuscript fund is made up by the Echmiadzin Patriarchate Matenadaran. According to the 5th century historian Lazar Papetsi, the Echmiadzin Matenadaran existed as early as the 5th century. It took a particular importance after 1441, when residence of Armenian Supreme Patriarch moved from Sis (Cilicia) to Echmiadzin. Hundreds of manuscripts started to be copied in Echmiadzin and nearby monasteries, especially in the 17th century. And little by little, the Echmiadzin Matenadaran became one of the richest manuscript depositories in the country. In one of the hishatarans (colophons) of 1668, it was noted that in the time of Philipos Supreme Patriarch (1633-1655) the library of the Echmiadzin Monastery was enriched with numerous manuscripts. The manuscript procuring was widely practised during the rule of Hakob Djughayetsi (1655-1680). Unfortunately, in the course of the 18th century, Echmiadzin was subject to repeated attacks of hostile forces. At the beginning of the 19th century only a small part of that great collection of manuscripts remained in the Matenadaran. A new page was turned in the history of the Echmiadzin Matenadaran after eastern Armenia joined Russia in 1828. The Armenian culture workers began to gather new manuscripts and put them in order with revived faith. In 1892, the Matenadaran had 3,338; in 1906: 3,788. On the eve of World War I: 4,060. In 1915 the Matenadaran received 1,628 manuscripts from Vaspurakan, Lim, Ktuts, Akhtamar, Varag, Van, Tavriss, etc.

On 17 December 1929 the Echmiadzin Matenadaran was decreed state property. The 4,060 manuscripts which had been taken to Moscow in 1915 for safekeeping were returned in April 1922. 1,730 manuscripts were added to this collection between 1915 and 1921. Soon the Matenadaran received collections from the Moscow Lazarian Institute of Oriental Languages, the Tiflis Nersessin Seminary and Tiflis Armenian Ethnographic Society, the Yerevan Museum of Literature, etc. A significant part of the manuscripts was from Erzerum, Nor-Nakhitchevan (Rostov on Don), Astrakhan, etc. In 1939 the Echmiadzin Matenadaran was transferred to Yerevan to facilitate the safety and subsequent research of the manuscripts. The Matenadaran was reorganized into the Institute of Scientific Research on 3 March 1959. Attached to it were established departments such as scientific preservation of manuscripts, their cataloguing, their research, the special departments for publication and translation of manuscripts. Thanks to tenacious efforts, the Matenadaran can now put a number of catalogues, guide-books, notations and card indexes at its user's disposal. The funds of the Matenadaran are the following: the Manuscript Fund, the Archives, the Library and the Department for the publication of texts. To keep the priceless treasures of ancient culture, to extend their lives, the Restoration and Bindery Offices were set up; special means have been worked out by making use of the achievements of native and foreign science. Historians, philologists and scientific workers of different fields make ample use of the many-sided studies on various spheres of medieval history of culture.

3.5 Bibliography: –

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage: –

4. Management plan

Preservation work achieved by the Matenadaran brought instant recognition to this great Armenian manuscript depository. Individuals both in Armenia and foreign countries often donate manuscripts and preserved fragments to the Matenadaran. Suffice it to mention Harutiun Hazarian from New York, who has donated 397 Armenian and non-Armenian manuscripts; Rafael Markossian of Paris who bequeathed 37 manuscripts to his homeland; Varouzhan Salatian of Damascus who, in memory of his parents, donated 150 manuscripts; Arshak Tigranian of Los Angeles;

Karpis Jrbashian and George Bakirjian of Paris and many, many others. Appreciable are those who, having in their possession only one manuscript, have given it away nonetheless. 95 year old Tachat Markossian of Gharghun village (New Julfa, Iran) sent to the Matenadaran in 1969 a manuscript dated 1069 A.D., copied in the Narek Monastery, having as prototype Mesrop Mashtots' 5th century Gospel. Hovhannes Bostanian of Lyon, France, lived through the genocide (1915) without parting with the only manuscript he possessed which he personally brought and presented to Matenadaran 52 years later, in 1967. Julien Hovsepian of New York had only one fragment of a rare miniature painting, but he gave it to the Matenadaran.

Every piece and fragment of Armenian culture is significant and the staff of the Matenadaran zealously endeavours to save them all from permanent loss. It is with this purpose in mind that efforts are being strengthened at home and abroad to bring back those manuscripts still in the hands of individuals. Many dedicated devotees of Armenian manuscripts and relics, young and old, are involved in the search recovery and preservation of Armenian cultural wealth. The administration of the Matenadaran also places great emphasis on the acquisition of microfilms of Armenian manuscripts kept in foreign museums and libraries in order to complete scientific research and publications of Matenadaran.

On-going projects to improve the means of preservation of the manuscripts include a tunnel 100m in length and 30m wide which was dug in the early 1980s under the hill on which the Matenadaran is built. Its primary purpose is to house the 17,000 manuscripts and several thousand fragments stored on the spot. It has now been completed; however, it is not yet in use because of two technical problems which remain unsolved: the airconditioning has to be modernized and the overall structure has to be made impervious to the leaks that occur each year when the snow melts. Several solutions are under study, although the Institute cannot afford any of these.

5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria

5.1 Assessment of the documentary heritage against each criterion described in Annex 2.

Criterion 1 - Influence: The Matenadaran houses a collection of medieval manuscripts containing patristic and other Armenian translations (5th century) from Greek or Syriac, the originals of which have disappeared: they include Six hundred questions and answers about the Book of Genesis by Philo of Alexandria, works by Hermes Trismegistos or Basil of Cesarea and even the Chronicon by Eusebius of Cesarea which is a vital source for the history of the first three centuries of Christianity.

Criterion 2 - The period: The Matenadaran was founded at Etchmiadzin at the beginning of the fourth century by the first "Catholicos" in Armenia. It was both a centre for the preservation of Greek and Syriac manuscripts and, from the fifth century onwards, the principal translation centre in Armenia. In 1939 the Matenadaran was transferred to Erevan where research work is still a major activity today. The oldest relics of Armenian literature date back to the 5th and 6th centuries. The complete manuscripts were not preserved, they reach the present times in the form of fragments each of which is a witness of an unpreserved manuscript. A part of those fragments have survived as fly-leaves to the bindings of the manuscripts. The medieval bookbinders often sewed in some leaves of parchment of some old or unuseful manuscripts between the cover and the first page to protect the writing from permanent contact with the binding. Thus many specimens of those earlier works of Armenian and foreign authors were preserved thanks to such fly-leaves. They are of great scientific value. A great part of fragments reached us separately. Very often, they were found unexpectedly here and there, in the caves, ruins or buried in the ground. There are separate pages torn out from manuscripts which were written a long time ago. They were handed from generation to generation carefully. The oldest binding and miniatures in the Matenadaran date back to the sixth century. The Echmiadzin Gospel, written in 989 in Noravank, has 233 parchment leaves, 7 miniatures - four of which are miniatures of the sixth century. Its binding is of ivory with magnificent ornamentation done in the sixth century. The oldest complete manuscript (preserved and dated) in the Matenadaran is the Lazarian Gospel written in 887. It was kept in the Moscow Lazarian Institute of Oriental Languages. It has 229 leaves written on parchment. The binding is a brown simple leather. As to the oldest existent Armenian paper manuscript, it is a collection of scientific and historical/philosophical work dating back to 981 A.D. which has 359 leaves.

5.2 Contextual assessment

Part of the collection is the largest Armenian manuscript in the world: the Homilies of Mush which is 55.3 X 70.5 cm and weighs 27.5 kg. It was written in the years 1200-1202 A.D. in the Avak Monastery in Erzenka. The scribe is Vardan and the illustrator is Stepanos. It has 603 parchment leaves and is divided into two halves which are kept separately. The smallest Armenian manuscript is a 1434 Church Calendar which is 3 x 4 cm and weighs 19 grams. The scribe is Agsent. The manuscript has 104 parchment leaves.

5.3 an evaluation of the authenticity: –

5.4 an assessment of rarity (if appropriate): –

6. Consultation

6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the

(a) Owner: -

(b) Custodian: Armen MALKHASIAN, Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts

(c) relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee: –

7. Nominator

7.1 Name : Sen AREVSHATIAN, Director, Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts & Arshak BANUCHYAN

7.2 Relationship to doc. heritage: Head, Dept. of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Youth Affairs & Sport

7.3 Contact person (if appropriate) :

7.4 Contact details : 5 Tumanian Str., YEREVAN, Armenia

PART B - SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8. Assessment of Risk

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9. Preservation Assessment

. Present physical state: -

. History of preservation: -

. Current preservation policy in relation to proposed nominated documentary heritage: -

. Person or organization responsible for preservation: –