

# Memory of the World Register

## Nomination Form

### Austria - *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem*

#### Part A – Essential Information

##### 1 Summary

Representing the entire surface of the Earth, the 50 volume *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* is often considered the most beautiful and most remarkable atlas ever composed. Containing more than 2,400 maps, prints, and drawings, it offers a pictorial encyclopedia of seventeenth-century knowledge ranging from geography and topography to warfare and politics.

The lawyer Laurens Van der Hem (1621-1678) of Amsterdam, used the largest and most expensive book published in the seventeenth century, Joan Blaeu's *Atlas Maior*, as the base for an even more ambitious collection of maps, charts, townscapes, architectural prints, portraits, etc., most of them luxuriously painted by well-known artists. Among the most impressive of Van der Hem's additions is the set of four volumes of manuscript maps and topographical drawings that were originally made for the Dutch East India Company (VOC).

Completely preserved and fully intact in the Austrian National Library in Vienna, the *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* contains a treasure of information whose value is inestimable, not only for the fields of geography and topography, but also in archeology, architecture, sculpture, ethnography, folklore, heraldry, navigation, fortification, and warfare. It also contains portraits of famous persons, technological inventions, public works, and many other aspects of seventeenth-century history and culture.

##### 2 Details of the Nominator

###### 2.1 Name (person or organization)

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [Austrian National Library]

###### 2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

Owner

###### 2.3 Contact person

Jan Mokre

###### 2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Kartensammlung

[Austrian National Library, Map Department]

Josefsplatz 1, 1015 Vienna, Austria

tel.: +43-1-53410/298, fax: +43-1-53410/319

([jan.mokre@onb.ac.at](mailto:jan.mokre@onb.ac.at))

##### 3 Identity and Description of the Documentary Heritage

###### 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

The Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem of the Austrian National Library

(ÖNB/Kar: 389.030-F.K 1-46, I-IV)

###### 3.2 Description

The *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* consists of 50 volumes of more than 2,500 pages altogether, bound in parchment. Several of the largest drawings were extracted from

the original bindings and stored in two unbound portfolios for purposes of conservation.

#### 4 Justification for Inclusion / Assessment against Criteria

##### 4.1 Is authenticity established?

The contents of the atlas are completely original. Nothing has been added or removed since the death of the primary owner. The children of the owner inherited the atlas. After the death of the last heir, Adriaan Moetjens auctioned the atlas in The Hague in 1730. Prince Eugene of Savoie, “stadtholder-general” of the Austrian Netherlands, bought the atlas and brought it to Vienna, Austria. After Eugene’s death in 1736, his heir sold the atlas to the Imperial Library in Vienna (today’s Austrian National Library).

##### 4.2 Is world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established?

The atlas offers a seventeenth-century image of the entire world. It represents the collector’s atlas as a category, as a special form of compiling cartographic material, yet is unique and irreplaceable due to the quality and quantity of its contents. The atlas is unique in terms of the lavish colour of the copperplate printed maps and other images. Contrary to the usual colour in those days by publishing house personnel, the engravings of the *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* were “elevated” with gold by one of the best illuminators of the day, master illuminator Dirck Jansz. van Santen. The atlas is also unique with respect to its additions, the so-called “secret atlas of the VOC” (see 4.3.a) and the large number of topographical drawings, the majority of which were done by well-known artists such as Willem Schellinks, Lambert Doomer, Jan Hackaert, and Reinier Nooms, also known as Zeeman.

The atlas has been the subject of several internationally significant scholarly studies and publications (see also 4.4).

##### 4.3 Is one or more of the criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style satisfied?

###### (a) time + (d) subject and theme

The atlas, compiled from 1662 to 1678, represents the cartographic heritage of the “Golden Age” of Dutch history when the development of overseas trade greatly influenced Dutch and European cultural life and led to changes in the global economy. The Netherlands, as one of the major trading nations successfully involved in the struggle for overseas hegemony, developed into the center for the production of maps and atlases. Topographical knowledge was valuable and therefore often kept secret. As one of the few private persons in possession of a certain portion of confidential cartographic material, Van der Hem imparted this in one of the most impressive additions to his atlas: the four volumes of manuscript maps and topographical drawings of East Asian regions, known as the “secret atlas of the Dutch East India Company” (VOC).

###### (e) form and style

The nature of the *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* is defined through the individual enlargement of the largest and most comprehensive world atlas that was published in the seventeenth century by unique additions and by the lavish colour of its prints (painted by master-illuminator Dirck Jansz van Santen) (see 4.2). The atlas contains not only the best, printed maps and charts of the day but also a great number of unique hand-drawn pictures (see 4.2). It represents the collector’s atlas as a category, as a special form of compiled cartographic material, but is unique in the quality and quantity of its content. In the range from commonly published atlases to individually compiled collector atlases, the *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* is the richest and most voluminous atlas preserved.

4.4 Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management that relate to this nomination?

The *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* is unique in the quality and quantity of its contents. The content and binding are original. Nothing has been added or removed since the primary owner's death. There is no foreseeable danger for the atlas. As public property, the atlas can be accessed in the Map Department of the Austrian National Library for scholarly studies. Initial public access is provided by a five-volume catalogue compiled at Utrecht University (the Netherlands), which includes the contents of the atlas and is reproduced in black-and-white with cartographical historical and art historical descriptions.

[The Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem of the Austrian National Library. Ed. committee: Günter Schilder, Bernard Aikema, Peter van der Krogt ('t Gooy-Houten, HES Publishers B. V., 1996, forthcoming – three volumes published, two volumes in progress)]

5 Legal Information

5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Federal Republic of Austria

Contact:

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Kartensammlung

[Austrian National Library, Map Department]

Josefsplatz 1, 1015 Vienna, Austria

tel.: +43-1-53410/298, fax: +43-1-53410/319

([jan.mokre@onb.ac.at](mailto:jan.mokre@onb.ac.at))

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to the owner)

Jan Mokre (Head of Map Department)

5.3 Legal status:

(a) Category of ownership

Public

(b) Accessibility

There is free access for qualified scholars in the Reading Room of the Map Department. They must provide evidence of scholarly interest.

(c) Copyright status

Copyright with the owner, the Austrian National Library.

(d) Responsible administration

Kartensammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek

[Map Department of the Austrian National Library]

6 Management Plan

6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage YES

The *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* is one of the treasures of the Austrian National Library. There are guidelines that define storage and access in terms of safety and conditions for preservation. The atlas is stored under controlled climatic conditions in an area secured by an alarm system. In order to avoid damage from frequent handling and in consideration of its extreme value both materially and intrinsically, access to the original is limited to scholars under the supervision of qualified attendants. An extensive catalogue provides initial and public access (see 4.4). There is a collection of black-and-white photographs of all sheets of the atlas available in the Department of Portraits, Pictures, and Fideicommis Library of the Austrian National Library.

## 7 Consultation

- 7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional Memory of the World committee  
The nomination was prepared by the custodian and is lodged by the owner in cooperation with the Austrian National Committee for the Memory of the World Program.

## **Part B – Subsidiary Information**

### 8 Assessment of Risk

#### 8.1 Detail the nature and scope of threats to this documentary heritage

The *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* is in good order and condition. The observation of strict guidelines has kept it from experiencing direct or indirect damage (see 6.1). Apart from the normal aging process, no potential variation of its state has been observed. There are no known unusual occurrences that have caused damage in the past.

### 9 Assessment of Preservation

#### 9.1 Detail the preservation context of the documentary heritage

The *Atlas Blaeu-Van der Hem* is well preserved and maintained under satisfactory and permanently reviewed conditions in the Map Department of the Austrian National Library. The guidelines for its safety (see 6.1) are strictly observed.

## **Part C – Lodgement**

This nomination is lodged by:

Dr. Johanna Rachinger (Director General of the Austrian National Library)

19 December 2002