



MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER – NOMINATION FORM

Austria - Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer
Austrian National Library, Vienna

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

The 180.000 papyri in the collection at the Austrian National Library probably classify this treasure as the greatest of its kind in the world.

The wide variety of writing materials and languages used in Egypt between 1500 B.C. (Egyptian book of the dead) and 1500 A.D. (printed haggadah in Hebrew) are one of the unique items in this collection. Many of the most important languages in the Old World exist in original writing in the collection: Examples include the Egyptian languages in their different forms: Hieroglyphics, Hieratic, Demotic and Coptic as well as Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Aramaic, Syriac, Pehlewi and Arabic.

The contents of the papyri cover every aspect of life: literature, school texts, magic, religion, belief in an after life, legal matters, financial matters, military matters, medicine, books and writing.

A separate papyrus museum, which opened in 1999 (53 show-cases, some 400 items) is an inviting occasion for the public to view exemplary treasures available.

1. Identity and Location

1.1 Name of documentary heritage

The Collection of Papyri (“Collection Erzherzog Rainer“) at the Austrian National Library

1.2 Country

Austria

1.3 State, province or region

Vienna

1.4 Address

Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek Josefsplatz 1 1015 Wien Austria

1.5 Name of organization or institution (if appropriate)

Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek

2. Legal Information

2.1 Owner (name and contact details)

Republic of Austria

2.2 Custodian (name and contact details)

Prof. Dr. Hermann Harrauer (hermann.harrauer@onb.ac.at/tel: + 43 1 534 10 323; fax: + 43 1 534 10 395)

2.3 Legal status (if different from 2.1)

(a) category of ownership (e.g. public, corporate or private)
public

(b) details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage

The collection of papyri is a department at the Austrian National Library with a custodian, a restorer and three researchers to take care of the collection.

(c) accessibility

There is free access for qualified scholars (who must bring evidence of scholarly interest).

Examples in the collection are displayed in the papyrus museum which is open to the public. All necessary security measures (special show cases and supervision of the showroom) have been organised.

(d) copyright status

The collection is owned by the Austrian National Library

2.4 Responsible administration

details should be given of the mechanism or organization already established, or to be established, to ensure the proper management of the documentary heritage

The storage space is especially adapted for papyri, work on preservation and conservation of the holdings is always in progress; objects are published according to scholarly interest. In addition to the permanent library staff, approx. seven research scholars are currently working full or part time on the collection's holdings thanks to funding by means of various grants.

3. Identification

3.1 Description and inventory

Approx. 180.000 objects (mostly papyri, parchment and paper; some wooden tablets, ostraka, cloths, leather-scrolls etc.) from the 15th century B.C. till the 16th century A.D.

3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

Each item is given a number according to language. Within this linguistic division, approximate thematic sub-divisions have also been made; in addition to the call numbers, there are inventory books containing descriptions by former custodians etc., which, in many cases document the place of origin, offer preliminary identification etc.

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

Almost the entire collection is available on microfilm and / or photos; digitization is planned.

3.4 History

The major part was bought in the 19th century by Archduke Rainer and given to the Emperor Franz Josef in 1899 who made this collection part of the k. and k. Imperial Library (later renamed as the Austrian National Library).

3.5 Bibliography: Please indicate up to three published sources describing the proposed documentary heritage.

The following ongoing publication of two series at the Austrian National Library: *Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung Erzherzog Rainer* and *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*. Articles on the papyri of many Viennese items are also published in the main research journals on the subject.

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

Prof. Dr. Roger Bagnall, (Columbia University, New York, Professor; Member of the International Committee of Papyrology)

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4. Management plan – see below Annex 1

The collection is housed at the Austrian National Library in rooms which have been specially adapted. The storage depots are protected from fire and other dangers and conform the strictest international requirements for the storage of papyri. Preservation and conservation work is constantly in progress and is funded from the ANL's regular budget. Access is limited to specialists in order to prevent any harm arising from inexperienced handling. In addition to the custodian, one full time restorer is university trained, while three further researchers have doctoral qualifications. Due to her special expertise, the restorer, Andrea Donau, is regularly requested to help in other collections of papyri. Ongoing training is also available at the collection. Preservation is part of the management policy, as the aims of the collection are the publication and preservation of the papyri in its holdings.

5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria

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

Criterion 1 - Influence

The texts in this collection have always contributed and are still contributing important additional information on our knowledge of the Old World. Probably the only piece surviving from the famous library in Alexandria is among the objects in the collection as well as the oldest known fragment containing the melody of an ancient song. These examples are representative for other fragments of equal importance in the collection.

Criterion 2 - Time

Among many other fragments from the 15th century B.C. till the 16th century A.D., one time window is especially worth noting: the Greek papyri from the period between the end of the Byzantine and the beginning of the Arabic rule in Egypt are to be mentioned as

extremely important primary sources. As far as Greek papyri are concerned, this collection houses the greatest number of such texts. This period was a time of change and is especially well documented in the papyri at this collection.

Criterion 3. - Place

Direct insight is given into the ancient world — as known at that time. People travelled and traded, wrote letters and contracts. These texts give insight into all aspects of life during the mentioned period in Egypt as well as into many matters beyond Egypt. Roman military matters or voyages to India are also mentioned in the papyri. We only know of many cities and villages, churches and temples of ancient Egypt thanks to these papyri.

Criterion 4. - People

The tax receipts offer a good example. Since a huge amount of Byzantine tax receipts are kept in the collection and, together with other material, they now enable us to write the social and economical history of the Byzantine empire. That social stratifications and groups of privileged persons or occupations become evident in the course of current research, is part of the exceptional value of this documentary heritage.

Criterion 5. - Subject / Theme

Some of the treasures in the collection include unique texts of great importance for the documentation of various religions (ancient Egyptian faith; Christianity and Islam), as illustrated by the following two outstanding examples: the oldest written Arabic text, a receipt written in Greek and Arabic from the beginning of the Arabic rule in Egypt, and the oldest known fragment from the biography of the Prophet Mohammed.

Criterion 6 Form and Style

The only writing carrier still in use is paper. All other writing materials (papyri, parchment etc. cf. 3.1.) have long since disappeared. Important examples include one of the very few Books of the Dead (made of papyrus) on which the pictures are gilded.

Criterion 7. - Social Value

The cultural value lies in the attestation on papyri of many ancient poets and writers and goes right back to a very rare item: The only text which is definitely known to have been written at the famous library of Alexandria. The importance of such thousand year old written heritage from various religions cannot be overestimated. Main religions include the Ancient Egyptian faith, Christianity and Islam such as Books of the Dead, rare New Testament papyri and the oldest known fragment of the biography of the prophet Mohammed.

An example of the collection's sociological value are the tax lists and receipts which enable us to describe social differences in the population of Greco-Roman Egypt, to document injustice to certain groups of the population (due to tax exemption or higher taxes). Such documents thereby contribute towards our impression of ancient society.

Secondary Criterion 1 Integrity

Family archives, tax documents as well as religious documents, which form various larger units, date from various periods. However, with some 180.000 items, the collection of papyri at the Austrian National Library can boast of a unique wealth of material. It may indeed be possible, if not probable, that it is the largest collection of this kind.

Secondary Criterion 2 Rarity

Each piece in the collection at the ANL is unique, also the number of items from a single location.

- 5.2 Contextual assessment including an assessment of the importance of a series of documents, the importance of a series of documents in a particular setting, and the assessment against other documentary heritage

The vast wealth of primary sources at the ANL probably rates this papyrus collection not only as the largest but also as one of the most important to research in the whole world.

- 5.3 An evaluation of the authenticity

The objects were written during the periods mentioned above. About 1000 fakes (from the 19th century) have been identified and are also kept in the collection. However, they are not included among the approx. 180.000 single objects from antiquity; every single one of which is antique.

- 5.4 An assessment of rarity (if appropriate)

On account of the uniqueness of such primary source material, scholars from all over the world visit the collection to work on these items.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the:

- (a) Owner
Austrian National Library, represented by Dr. Hans Marte, General Director
- (b) Custodian
Prof. Hermann Harrauer
- (c) Relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee (if appropriate)

The Nomination was prepared in cooperation with the Austrian National Committee for the Memory of the World Programme

7. Nominator

- 7.1 Name

The Austrian National Committee for the Memory of the World Programme

- 7.2 Relationship to documentary heritage

7.3 Contact person (if appropriate)

Dr. Heinrich Badura

Secretary, Austrian National Committee for the Memory of the World Programme

7.4 Contact details

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