

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	



MOWCAP

UNESCO Memory of the World Regional Committee for Asia/Pacific

Asia/Pacific *Memory of the World* Register nomination form

Part A: Essential information

1 Summary (max 100 words)

Avesta is the overall name given to Iranians most ancient collection of writings and composition; in fact it is an Iranian encyclopedia and the holy scripture for followers of Zarathustra. Zoroastrians are spread throughout Iran and India. This book has survived for three millennia. The copy that we are interested in is the oldest, dated and the most complete copy of this text in the world and includes *vendidad*, *Visperad* and *Yasna*. This edition was scribed in Yazd in the 1607 C.E. Given the fact that neither Avestan nor Pahlavi script are no longer in current use, and the fact that the surviving text in these languages are very rare, the present text is very important from the standpoint of linguistics and writing system research.

2 Nominator

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

Central library and Documentation Center of Tehran University

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Custodian

2.3 Contact person(s)

Susan Asili

Manager of Manuscripts section

Central Library and Document Center

2.4 Contact details

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	

Name	Address
Tehran University Central Library and Document Center	Enqelab square Tehran Iran

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+98-21-66466199	+98-21-66495388	asili@ut.ac.ir

3 Details of the Nominated Documentary Heritage

3.1 Title of documentary heritage item or collection

Title: *Vendidad*

The present edition had been scribed by Fereydoon Marzban in Sharif Abad (located in the Iranian Yazd Province) on the Yazdagrid Year of 976 which corresponds to 1017 A.H. and 1607 CE. Vendidad has been composed in Avestan, Pahlavi and Persian script. It is 292 pages long and has a time-worn leather binding. It measures 36 by 24 centimeters and is currently held as part of the manuscript collection within University of Tehran Central Library.

3.2 Catalogue or registration details

The nominated manuscript is currently kept at the manuscript vault of University of Tehran Central Library and documentation center under registration number. 11263

3.3 Photographs or a video of the documentary heritage

Compact Disc is included bearing visual information on parts of the nominated manuscript

3.4 History/Origin/Background/Provenance

The nominated manuscript has been kept in the household of Zoroastrian Priests in Yazd since its inception. It was sold to the University of Tehran Central Library by a member of the very same household in 2002.

3.5 Bibliography

Numerous researches have been carried out by Iranian and European scholars regarding Avesta

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	

and its history. Many works have been published on the topic. A facsimile copy of the nominated manuscript incorporating an extensive introduction by Dr. Katayoon Mazdapour is currently in print:

- afshar, I. (3). Anjameha. *Nameh Baharestan*(5).
- Boroumand, B. (n.d.). Kateban-e Noskhehaye Pahlavi va Avestayee az Khandan-e Marzban. *Nameh Baharestan*, 6/7(11/12).
- Emadi, A. R. (n.d.). Yad Dasht dar mored-e Vendidad. *Nameh Baharestan*, 3(6).
- Mazdapour, K. (2002). Now Yafteh-haye Ko-han-sal. *Jahan Ketab*.
- J.M. Unvala (1940). collection of colophons of manuscripts bearing on Zoroastrianism in some libraries of Europe. Bombay. 1940
- Darmesteter James: Observations sur le Vandidad. Paris
- Moulton James.(1911). Early religious poetry of Persia. Cambridge
- Harles, Charles. (1921). Introduction to the Avesta
- Geiger, Wilhelm (1886). The age of Avesta and Zoroasrer. London

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

Name

Dr. Katayon Mazdapour

Qualifications

expert of ancient religions and
languages of Iran

Address

Tehran

Iran

(Ph)+98-21-88907370

Name	Qualifications	Address
------	----------------	---------

Name	Qualifications	Address
------	----------------	---------

I assert that the above named referees have given their written permission for their names and contact details to be used in connection with this nomination for the *Asia/Pacific Memory of the World Register*, and their names to appear on the website. (Contact details will not appear on the website or be disclosed by the MOWCAP to any third party).

Signature

Full name (Please PRINT)

Eshagh Salahi
Iranian National Committee for
the Memory of the World

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	

Date

4 Legal information

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

Name Address: Enqelab square, Tehran. Iran

Central library and
Documentation Center
of Tehran University

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+98-21-66466199	+98-21-66495388	

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name Address

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
-----------	-----------	-------

4.3 Legal status

Tehran University ; Central Library and Documentation Center

4.4 Accessibility

Accessing the original copy is only possible under certain circumstances. However, the digitized copy of the book is available for all researchers to access their required information.

4.5 Copyright status

The copyright owner of the nominated manuscript is the Central Library and Documentation Center of University of Tehran

5 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 First criterion: authenticity.

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	

This edition is one of the oldest Avesta manuscripts in the world and the oldest known copy of Avesta in Iran. It had been written in yazd in the Yazdagird year of 976 which corresponds to 1017 AH (1607 C.E.). It was scribed by Fereydoon Marzban who was commissioned to create this work by the grieving family of a novice priest called Jamshid Marzban so that it could be recited by the Zoroastrian priests honoring his memory. Fereydoon Marzban himself was a member of priestly households in Kerman, who was residing in Sharif Abad, a village in Yazd, at the time of writing of the nominated manuscript. The time of writing has been clearly mentioned in the manuscript in Persian. Since its inception, its consecutive owners have made extensive annotations to the manuscript that serves as a capsule history for the book.

5.2 Second criterion: world significance.

Avesta is the oldest and the most important book compiled in ancient Iran. It provides us with useful information of the thought, religion, myths and science in ancient Iran. Thus it is invaluable from standpoint of linguistic comparisons as well as sociology, literature and culture. Avesta represents one of the main springwells of Iranian Mythologies and national epics. The common Aryan roots between Iran and India are well demonstrated in the ancient mythologies of these nations. The cultural ties between Iran and India are seen in the Iranian Avestan and Indian Mahabharat mythos. The Yashtha section within Avesta retells the oral history of Iran. It is an important section in its epic form as well as from the standpoint of communication of ancient Iranian culture. Many of the cognizances within Avesta are common concepts among Iranians and Indians.

Vendidad provides passages about the initial origin of Iranians and the cities they chose to inhabit for the first time. The geographic information provided in Avesta matches Iranian eastern regions and the foothills of Hindukosh and Pamier mountain range.

During 8th Century CE, a group of Iranian Zoroastrian people immigrated to the adjacent lands. The most important part of these groups settled in India and later became known as the Parsees. They have kept their Iranian cultural characteristics. Avesta is the holy book of Zoroastrians in Iran, India, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan.

The nominated manuscript has been written in *Din Dabireh* (Avestan), Pahlavi and Persian writing systems. Avesta language is Persian, i.e. the manuscript is comprehensible for the Persian speakers even today. But for the past 15 centuries the Arabic writing system has been used in Iran and Avestan and Pahlavi writing systems have fallen into disuse. Manuscripts and text surviving with this script are extremely rare. Avesta provides the most authoritative reference in this respect. Given the fact that Avestan and Pahlavi writing system has presently fallen into obsolescence, the nominate manuscript proves to be important from the standpoint of linguistic studies.

Abraham Anquetil-Duperron carried out the first Avesta studies in the West in 1754 CE. Having travelled to India, he came to know Avesta through Parsees. He then translated Avesta into French. 19th Century Europe witnessed wide spread scholarly studies on Avesta. There are numerous manuscripted copies of Avesta throughout various libraries around the world. The oldest copy presented to date is a copy known as K7 which is held at Copenhagen University, Denmark. This copy had been written in 1397 CE, but only contain the Visperad section and therefore incomplete. Our nominated copy is the most complete ancient copy of Avesta identified to date.

5.3 Third, world significance

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	

Time:

Avesta is three millennia old. The nominated manuscript has been commissioned and manuscripted in 1607 CE. It was scribed by Fereydoon son of Marzban son of Fereydoon Son of Bahram, who belonged to a household of scribes. According to the research undertaken, based on the colophons written in editions by members of this household, Fereydoon ancestry have been verified back to seven generations. The period coincides with the reign of the Saffavid Monarch, Shah Abbas. Avesta is sacred to Zoroastrians in the past three thousand years and recited during religious ceremonies.

Place:

The nominated manuscript has been written in Yazd which is one of the important centers for Zoroastrians in Iran. In centuries following the conversion of Iranian people to Islam, a large number of Zoroastrian inhabited and continued to inhabit this city. Zoroastrian Priests, also known as *Moubed*, made effort to preserve and maintain ancient Iranian traditions. Fereydoon scribed this copy in Sharif Abad near Yazd. This area, according to other copies of Avesta was of importance due to Moubeds' activities

People:

Avesta is a religious tome that has numerous followers around the world. The text of Vendidad and Yasht were originally a liturgical text recited by Zoroastrian priests dueling Yazshan ceremony, A large number of people always have derived their religious and living instructions from them. Thus studying of this text nowadays is essential for understanding a period of cultural and social history in Iran and India.

Subject and theme:

In addition of being a religious text, Avesta also teaches its followers a style of living. Vendidad is among five most important sections of Avesta. It contains religious ceremonies and protocols, worldly as well as heavenly injunctions and punishments. Penal codes against criminals and sinners are provided in this book. Visperad and Yasna, contain the liturgies recited during yazshan ceremony.

Vendidad also provides useful information on medicine, medical divisions and medical fees. The book also contains a list of ancient Iranian names. Known and unknown names that have been cited in Pahlavi and New Persian texts with some variations. Avesta Also contains information on formation of communities, past geographical divisions, people conception regarding the genesis of the world and the Iranian *Weltanschau*.

Form and style:

The Vendidad and Yasht were originally a religious text recited by the priest's during Yazshan ceremony. Zoroastrian nowadays conduct such ceremonies by reading from, not the avestan or Pahlavi text, but from the Persian text of vendidad. The former two writing systems have fallen into oblivion. What is remarkable about the nominated manuscript is

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	

that, unlike other Avestan text, Foredoom did not employ Pahlavi writing system exclusively for writing of religious text but rather has used it also to write about daily events in details. This is a style that had been unprecedented at the time. To date no non-religious text have been uncovered that has been written in Pahlavi writing system.

6 Other matters taken into account: rarity, integrity and threat

Rarity

The nominated manuscript is important for linguists and scholars of writing systems because Avestan writing system is no longer practiced and has even been lost to the fog of time. Our copy is one of the most complete versions of Avesta and include the full text of Vendidad, Visperad and main parts of Yasna.

Integrity Within

Currently five chapters of Avesta which are Visperad, Yasna, Vandidad, Yashts and Khordeh Avesta have survived. But none of the ancient copies of Avesta includes all these five chapters. Most manuscripts often cover one or two chapter. Our nominated manuscript includes three chapters: Vendidad, Visperad and Yasna. Thus it is more complete when compared to other copies. Such compilations are also called simplified vendidad and read during religious ceremonies. The nominated manuscript is annotated with Zend (Avesta interpretations). Currently there are numerous Avesta manuscripts in various libraries around the world. The nominated manuscript in our believe is among the oldest complete copies of this text in the world.

Threat

Given the fact that a replica of this work has been produced and the original copy is safely stored within a standard vault, no particular danger threatens the nominated manuscript.

Attach a separate statement if space is insufficient!

7 Preservation and Access Management Plan

Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? Are there strategies to preserve and provide access to it?

YES NO

8 Any other information

Please provide any other information that supports the inclusion of this item(s) / collection on the Asia/Pacific *Memory of the World Register*.

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	

Attach a separate statement if space insufficient.

9 Checklist

Nominees may find completing the following checklist useful before sending the nomination form to MOWCAP.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | MOWCAP website reviewed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Introduction read |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | summary completed (maximum 100 word) (section 1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nomination and contact details completed (section 2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | If this is a joint nomination, section 2 appropriately modified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Documentary heritage identified (sections 3.1 – 3.3) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | History/Origin/Background/Provenance completed (section 3.4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bibliography completed (section 3.5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations recorded (section 3.6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Declaration signed and dated that all referees have given their written permission for their names to appear on the MOWCAP website (section 3.6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of owner completed (section 4.1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of custodian – if different from owner - completed (section 4.2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of legal status completed (section 4.3) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of accessibility completed (section 4.4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Details of copyright status completed (section 4.5) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evidence presented of authenticity (section 5.1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evidence presented of world significance (section 5.2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Evidence presented against one or more additional criteria (section 5.3) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Information presented on rarity, integrity and threat (section 6) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summary of Preservation and Access Management Plan completed. If there is no formal Plan provide details about current and/or planned access, storage and custody arrangements (section 7) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other information provided - if applicable (section 8) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sample photographs or VDO prepared for MOWCAP use (if required) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Printed copy of Nomination Form made for organisation's records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Electronic copy of Nomination Form made for MOWCAP use (if required) |

Year	Name of documentary heritage	Page no.
2013	Vendidad	