

Nomination form

International Memory of the World Register

Indigenous language vocabulary from the New World translated into Spanish

2014-61

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

The General Archive of the Indies, founded in Seville in 1785, retains custody of assets produced by the institutions of the Spanish administration to govern and manage the overseas territories of Spain's colonial empire. Amongst its assets is a selection of vocabulary and dictionaries from various indigenous languages translated into Spanish at the end of the 18th century. These twelve unique documents facilitate a greater understanding of the lexicography of 35 indigenous American and Asian languages in the context of the 18th century. The unique nature of these assets of documentary heritage lies in that many of the peoples reflected in the vocabulary are still present today, although unfortunately, some ethnic groups have not survived; as a result, the documents represent an irreplaceable primary source to study their language and culture. Vocabularies represented are as follows: Tagalog, Bicol, Pangasinan, Cagayan, Bisaya, Sambal, Quechua, Aymara, Saliba, Quiché, Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil, Kekchi, Poqomam, Poqomchi', Popoluca, Ch'ol, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Chane-abal, Zoque, Subinha, Chiapaneca, Mam, Cabécar, Viceyta, Lean, Mulia, Terraba, Chaima, Cumanagoto, Core, Paria, Tahitian and Rapanui, a testament to the cultural diversity of the indigenous communities on three continents: America, Asia and Oceania.

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

Spain: Department of Education, Culture and Sport. General Directorate of Fine Arts, Cultural Heritage and of Archives and Libraries.

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

The General Directorate is responsible for fostering preservation of Documentary Heritage and national and international promotion and dissemination (Royal Decree 1887/2011, of 30 of December, developing the basic organic structure of the Department of Education, Culture and Sport).

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Mr. Jesús Prieto de Pedro. General Director of Fine Arts, Cultural Heritage and of Archives and Libraries

2.4 Contact details

Name	Address	
Mr. Jesús Prieto de Pedro	Plaza del Rey nº 1 28004 Madrid, Spain	
Telephone	Facsimile	Email
34 917017271	34 917017403	archivos.estatales@mecd.es

3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

If inscribed, the exact title and institution(s) to appear on the certificate should be given

Indigenous language vocabulary from the New World translated into Spanish

3.4 History/provenance

The General Archive of the Indies is basically responsible for custody of the resources produced by the institutions created by the Spanish Administration for the government and administration of Spain's overseas territories. These institutions are: the Council of the Indies and the Office Secretariats, the Contracting House and the Consulates of Seville and Cadiz. It also preserves other resources from less important institutions, as well as those from private individuals linked to Spanish colonies in America and Asia. It was created in the XVIII century mainly with the documents that were previously at the Simancas Archive.

The aim of the Archive is to conserve these resources and, through their organisation and description, encourage their dissemination to all citizens.

4.0 Legal information

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

Name	Address
Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport	Plaza del Rey nº 1. 28004 Madrid

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
34 917017271	34 917017403	archivos.estatales@mecd.es

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

Name	Address
General Archive of the Indies	Edificio de la Lonja, Av. de la Constitución, 3 Edificio de La Cilla, C/ Santo Tomás, 5, 41071 Sevilla (Spain)

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
34 954500528	34 954219485	agj1@mecd.es

4.3 Legal status

Legal and administrative responsibility for the preservation of the documentary heritage: Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport for the documents from the General Archives of the Indies.

4.4 Accessibility

Free access at the General Archives of the Indies where the originals documents are kept. Reproductions of some of the documents are public on the website of the Spanish State

4.5 Copyright status

All the manuscripts and documents are over 100 years old and therefore form part of the public domain. Digital and other types of copies are covered by intellectual property legislation.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

For all documents, authenticity is confirmed. The documents of General Archive of the Indies have been preserved since the XVII century in the public administration Archives: first at the Archive of Simancas (XVII century) and later on, in the XVIII century, some documents were transferred from the Simancas Archive to the Indies Archives. These facts assure the authenticity of the above documents, since in both Archives were the original documents of the Spanish Public Central Administration in the XVII century.

5.2 World significance

All nominated documents are of world significance, unique and irreplaceable.

Vocabulary and dictionaries in the indigenous languages of the New World are an irreplaceable source of information in studying the linguistics of the indigenous peoples of America and the Philippines. They represent a collection of the earliest written references transliterated into the Latin alphabet of these languages of oral tradition, for which no writing system existed. These lexicographical lists of Amerindian languages initially facilitated communication between Spaniards and indigenous populations; originally, they were created by missionaries and interpreters who accompanied the colonists. Thanks to the initial groundwork done by missionaries and, as a result of the compilations made during the 18th century, a sample of which are the documents nominated for the Memory of the World Register, our generation is able to access invaluable material that has served to perform comparative linguistic analyses and studies on now extinct indigenous languages.

Vocabulary and dictionaries in the indigenous languages produced during the period of Spanish colonisation currently serve to showcase the values of interculturality and recognise the cultural diversity of indigenous peoples in America, Asia and Oceania. They have enabled us to rescue, recognise and promote the rich, local oral tradition of peoples colonised by Europeans and demonstrate that today we have an understanding of many of these languages thanks to the conversion into the Latin alphabet that took place during Spain's colonial period. In doing so, these languages were provided with an alphabetic writing system, often with the purpose of producing dictionaries or translations into Spanish, as is the case of the documents that we are submitting to the Memory of the World Register.

The geographical impact of these documents is world-wide, embracing cultures on four continents: Europe (Spain), a large part of America (from Central America to the Andean countries), Asia (Philippines) and Oceania (Polynesia).

5.3 Comparative criteria:

Does the heritage meet any of the following tests? (It must meet at least one of them.)

1 Time

The documents submitted to the Memory of the World Register all date from the late 18th century. They form part of the records relating to the request for indigenous vocabulary made by Catherine II of Russia (documents No. 1 to 9) and reveal the encyclopaedist spirit of the period. Documents 11 and 12, meanwhile, were attached to the manuscripts describing the first news sent of the discovery of various islands in the Pacific (Easter Island and Tahiti), that is to say, they also date back to a very unique space in time: The geographic discoveries of the 18th century.

2 Place

The nominated documents contain essential information on the history of America, Asia and Oceania, given that they represent the earliest written references to the local languages of 35 indigenous peoples (see list under section 3.2). We would like to highlight that many of these ethnic groups and cultures have not survived to the present day; as a result, this written documentary evidence on their local language is especially important in the study of ethno-linguistics, ethnology and cultural anthropology.

3 People

4 Subject and theme

5 Form and style

6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

These documents are of great importance to indigenous communities who still use their languages and have written evidence of their existence dating back to the 18th century.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

Conservation of such documents is quite unusual, given that most are housed at royal libraries or European universities, the Vatican Library, the libraries of religious orders or the Library of Congress. These vocabularies and dictionaries have been preserved in their original format at the General Archive of the Indies; they can therefore be considered to be rare artefacts of great documental and informative value.

6.2 Integrity

The documents preserved at the General Archives of the Indies have been preserved by the Spanish central administration services since its origin because they testify all the official actions taken by the Spanish government during centuries. Although the General Archive of the Indies was created in the XVIII century, it was created with documents that, mainly, were previously located at the General Archive of Simancas. The integrity of the documents has been guaranteed by specific civil servants since its origin.
