

International Memory of the World Register

The Laurentian Chronicle 1377 (Russian Federation)

2012-71

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

The Laurentian Chronicle 1377 is a unique manuscript book treasure, the earliest Russian chronicle surviving almost intact. The codex contains the earliest extant copy of the Tale of Bygone Years and provides the most authoritative source for the primary history of Eastern Slavs in the context of worldwide processes in medieval history. The Laurentian Chronicle is the primary written chronological basis for the celebrations of 1150 years of the Russian state in 2012.

Made at the time of the Kulikov Battle, the Laurentian Chronicle had a crucial role in ideological and moral justification of the need for political unity in Rus' and consolidation of all patriotic forces on the eve of resolute resistance to the Horde. Contemporary situation cast no doubt upon the fact that the concept of the Laurentian Chronicle was closely related to its purpose to give blessing to Russian warriors for the first offensive action against the Horde since the Tartar-Mongol Yoke was established. The victorious campaign of several Russian princes in the spring 1377 opened up the way for the Kulikov Battle that would have a profound impact on the world historical process.

The Laurentian Chronicle is written on parchment, the highly qualified writing and sustained ornamental style making the manuscript a superior work of historical book art. The account provided a basis for Russian historiography, and a classic sample for secondary and higher education. The annals integrating valuable folklore sources of prehistoric age provide an indispensable source for studies of national historical identity. The Laurentian Chronicle ranks among the best known projects of world culture.

2.0 Nominator

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

National Library of Russia

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Depository of national ownership

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

Likhomanov Anton Vladimirovich, Director General National Library of Russia

2.4 Contact details

Name	Address
Likhomanov Anton Vladimirovich	National Library of Russia. Sadovaia St. 18, Saint Petersburg, 191069 Russia

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
(812) 310-28-56	(812) 310-61-48	a.likhomanov@nlr.ru

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

Laurentian Chronicle. 1377. Nizhny Novgorod. Primary scribe monk Laurentius.
Codex. 173 sheets. Body dimensions: 255/250 x 205/210 x 45/52 mm. Parchment, ink, cinnabar.
Written in uncial (ff. 1–40) and semi-uncial in two columns. Headpiece in animal style. Ornamental initials. Binding: boards in leather with blind embossing.

3.2 Catalogue or registration details

Call number: PHE, F.n.IV.2. Manuscripts, National Library of Russia.
Sadovaia St. 18, Saint Petersburg, 191069. Russia.

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

Digitized manuscript fragments

3.4 History/provenance

The Laurentian Chronicle was made in Nizhny Novgorod in 1377. The main part of the text was copied by monk Laurentius giving his name to the codex. A note in cinnabar in the end pages, made by scribe Laurentius, says that the chronicle was copied with the blessing of Dyonisius Bishop of Suzdal for Prince Dmitry Konstantinovich of Suzdal and Nizhny Novgorod. The ownership changed more than once. It is known that the Codex was in Nizhegorod Annunciation Monastery in the 16th century, was then moved to the Monastery of Nativity in Vladimir, and belonged to library collections of St Sophia's in Novgorod in the 18th century. In 1791 the precious codex was acquired by A.I. Musin-Pushkin who presented it to Emperor Alexander I in 1811. The gift was soon given to Imperial Public Library (currently the National Library of Russia) where it has been held to date in controlled-access schedule specified for highly valued heritage.

4.0 Legal information

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

Name	Address
Russian Federation	

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

Name	Address
National Library of Russia	191069, Saint Petersburg, Sadovaia St., 18-20

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
(812) 310-28-56	(812) 310-61-48	a.likhomanov@nlr.ru

4.3 Legal status

Provide details of legal and administrative responsibility for the preservation of the documentary heritage

State ownership

4.4 Accessibility

Describe how the item(s) / collection may be accessed

Access is provided under the Federal Law of Archival Services in the Russian Federation of 22.10.2004 № 125-FZ, and Federal Law of Library Services in the Russian Federation of 29.12.1994 № 78-FZ

All access restrictions should be explicitly stated below:

The text of the Laurentian Chronicle is published in an academic edition with unrestricted access for publishing both in conventional printed versions and on the Internet. The primary part of the Laurentian Chronicle was published by Archeographic Commission in 1872 году in lithographed edition allowing visual representation of the manuscript.

Access to the original codex is in the Library's Manuscripts Room. Plans for improved access for research purposes include: high-quality digitization of the whole codex with subsequent free Internet resource "The Laurentian Chronicle: electronic facsimile presentation of the manuscript heritage" on the National Library of Russia official portal.

4.5 Copyright status

Describe the copyright status of the item(s) / collection

Public property; access is provided in the National Library of Russia Reading Room on authorization; free access is by annotated edition of the text, and lithoprint of the primary part.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

The Laurentian Chronicle is a manuscript codex made in 1377.

Documentary evidence is represented by a scribe's note on p. 172v–173.

Codicological, paleographic and linguistic data permit the library to confidently describe it as the original copy rather than a later falsification.

5.2 World significance

The Laurentian Chronicle is the earliest extant Russian chronicle containing *The Tale of Bygone Years*, the earliest source for the history of Old Slavs.

The chronicler's desire to identify the place of Rus' in the world is essential in this work: the history

of the Slavs is presented in a broader context of world history. The text describes the events going on both in the Slavic lands, and in

the vast territories abroad including Byzantium, Europe, and Eastern nomadic tribes. This makes the Laurentian Chronicle an indispensable source for general human history.

The Laurentian Chronicle also registers some unique evidence. It is the Laurentian Chronicle that contains the only extant copy of the famous *Pouchenie* (Instruction) by Vladimir Monomakh, the unique medieval work

of a ruler, a singular manifesto of morality in politics.

The Laurentian Chronicle is of paramount importance in interpreting global historical processes both in medieval and modern times. The Chronicle recounts in much detail and in the form of annual records the history of Rus' for centuries

dedicated to the mission of protecting European civilization against Eastern nomads. The account continues until 1305 and reflects the key landmarks in the history of Russian statehood as a substantial part of the worldwide

civilization progress.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

1 Time

The Laurentian Chronicle was made in the heroic age of Kulikov Battle. It was the time of Russian war of liberation from the Mongol Yoke, national growth and consolidation of all progressive forces under the aegis of Moscow. The account vividly recalls the patriotic tendencies of the time, glorifying the Prince Warrior and Defender, highlighting the heroic history of Rus'. The legendary past provides heroic models surviving in popular historical memory. These were particularly important in contemporary context, calling the princes for unity on the eve of decisive battle against the Horde.

The Laurentian Chronicle is a key monument of the revival of Russian statehood at a critical point in history. This is evident from purpose of the codex. In the spring of 1377, Prince Dmitry Konstantinovich of Nizhny Novgorod set out in the FIRST OFFENSIVE MARCH against the enemy, seizing Mamay's vassal town Bulgar on the Volga. The Laurentian Chronicle, as Laurentius states in his note, was completed by March 20, the day of Russian forces taking the field. Bishop Dionysius of Suzdal blessed the codex for the Prince, regarding it as an example of ancestral glory. The Laurentian Chronicle was the Bishop's spiritual direction, his consent for gallant and resolute action. Three years later the Prince's son-in-law, Prince Dmitry of Moscow, later referred to as *Donskoy* (of the Don River), would take the blessing for the Kulikov Battle from Sergius of Radonezh, spiritual luminary of the Russian land.

2 Place

The Laurentian Chronicle was made in North-East Russia as an appeal for consolidation and national liberation from the Mongol Yoke. It was Nizhny Novgorod where monk Laurentius was working on the codex that was the most reliable ally of Moscow in consolidating politics. In the difficult domestic situation with Rus' torn apart by internecine strife, the Moscow-Nizhny Novgorod axis provided a basis for a coalition of Russian princes against the Horde. The political union was strengthened by ties of blood as Eudoxy, wife of Prince Dmitry Ivanovich of Moscow (*Donskoy*), was a daughter of Prince Dmitry Konstantinovich of Nizhny Novgorod and Suzdal. The military and dynastic alliance led to political consolidation of Rus, and emergence of a new Russian state with its centre in Moscow. The entrance of Muscovite Rus' on European political arena signified a new phase in world history, as Russia would become the world's primary stronghold of the Orthodox Church and culture. In this context, the Laurentian Chronicle appears as an ideological symbol of a crucial stage in world history.

3 People

The Laurentian Chronicle as a written history of Russian nation integrates different literary, and folklore genres. Written history starts from pre-historic sources represented by verbal tales, legends and historical songs. The chronicler was able to aggregate information for the past centuries. Popular memory retained tales of ancient war princes and anonymous common people, terrible nomadic invasions, tragic internecine feuds, glorious victories and bitter defeats. Folklore as a basic source for the writing of annals made the Chronicle a treasure of historical national identity. Thus the Laurentian Chronicle appears as a key historical source for studies of national mentality and world-views.

4 Subject and theme

The subject of the Laurentian Chronicle is the history of Slavs in terms of the global historical process. The account follows every phase in the evolution of Rus' towards statehood up to the date when the codex was completed. The codex highlights general characteristics in the development and evolution of medieval states, including tribal alliances, strengthening of princely authority, feudal strife, consolidating trends against external threats, etc. All through the account runs the universal theme of patriotism and steadfast reflection on the fates of the native land.

5 Form and style

The Laurentian Chronicle is a codex written on parchment, with a medieval-style cover of boards bound in leather. The text is in two writing styles: the uncial and semi-uncial. The two writing styles corroborate the date indicated by the scribe palaeographically, as it was the 2nd part of the 14th century when traditional uncial was gradually substituted by semi-uncial. The manuscript has one headpiece (f. 1 verso) in animal style with two stylized birds and contours in cinnabar on inked ground; large profiled interlaced initials with the ground partly filled in ink. On the whole, this is a typical case of contemporary written histories. On the other hand, the calligraphic expertise and highly traditional, restrained but sophisticated ornamentation make the Laurentian Chronicle a genuine work of book art. The form is in complete harmony with the narrative style of a monumental medieval history.

6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

The Laurentian Chronicle is most significant today. In particular, the record for the year 862 describes the earliest history of the invitation of Varangians to Rus' as the foundation of Russian statehood. Thus the Laurentian Chronicle appears as a chronological basis for symbolic commemorations like the thousandth anniversary of Russia in 1862 or the forthcoming official celebrations of 1150 years of the Russian state in 2012.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

The Laurentian Chronicle is the only and earliest manuscript on parchment containing the Tale of Bygone Years and the primary history of Slavs.

6.2 Integrity

The body of the book is integral, the original binding missing (as typical of the early manuscript book heritage).

The item survives in its integrity with few fragmentary losses (several sheets).

