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Manuscript Librarians Group

Bulgaria – Backgrounds

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Introduction

The report is focused on the most important manuscript and archive collections in the country. Smaller collections kept in regional or local libraries, archives and museums are only referred to.

The largest holdings of publicly accessible manuscripts in the country are in the National Library, followed by that in Ivan Vazov National Library in Plovdiv. The Library of the Ivan Dujčev Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies, Sofia, with the largest collection of Greek manuscripts, is a branch library of St. Kliment of Ohrid University Library in Sofia. Small collections or single volumes are held by regional or city libraries, archives, museums and other institutions, which – according to the Union Catalogue of Bulgarian manuscripts kept in Bulgaria (1982) – are situated in Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Elena, Etropole, Gabrovo, Kazanluk, Kjustendil, Koprivshtitsa, Lovech, Pazardzhik, Pleven, Samokov, Sliven, Sofia, Shumen, Svishtov, Teteven, Trojan, Varna and Veliko Turnovo.

Of the ecclesiastical libraries, the Ecclesiastic-historical and Archive Institute at the Bulgarian Patriarchate in Sofia and the Rila Monastery library (the latter representing the only extant monastic library in Bulgaria since the Late Middle Ages) have the richest holdings. Smaller and small collections are kept in the provincial capitals Vratsa, Plovdiv and Veliko Tarnovo, also in Uspenie Bogorodichno Metropolitan Church and Pokrov Bogorodichen Church in Samokov (near Sofia), as well as in some monasteries. The losses caused by thefts and illegal traffic in museum and other collections during the last twenty or so years, are not officially registered.

St. Cyril and St. Methodius National Library, Sofia (CMNL)

Established as a public library in 1878, immediately after the Liberation. In 1879 in answer to the proposal of Prof. Marin Drinov, Chairman of the Library Commission and Head of the National Education Department, the Library was legitimised as a State institution under the

name of Bulgarian National (People's) Library. The Division of Manuscripts, Documents and Literary Heritage consists of several departments:

- [Manuscripts and Old Printed Books Department](#). Collections:
 - About 1500 Slavonic mss. and unspecified number of fragments, of mainly religious character, from the 10th/11th-19th century, representing in the first place the South Slavonic literary tradition. The oldest Slavonic manuscript is the Enina Apostolos of the 11th (or late 10th) century, which is also the oldest known copy of the Slavonic translation of the Apostolos.
 - 148 Greek mss. from the 10th-19th century.
 - Latin mss. from the 13th (one item), and 17th-19th century.
 - A few modern German, Italian and Rumanian manuscripts. – One Armenian Gospel from the 10th century, one Georgian Typikon of the 18th century and one Ethiopian manuscript, of still unknown date and place of origin.
- [Bulgarian Historical Archive](#); has the statute of National Archive.
 - A few manuscript fragments, the earliest dated 11th century.
 - Historical documents of the 15th-17th century, like the Register of the Male Population of Castel Mirabello (1653), the Codex of the Ohrid Archbishopric of 1677 or the 17th-century documents of the Bulgarian Catholics.
 - Documents of the 19th-20th century, forming the main part of the collection and reflecting the period of National Revival and Liberation; among the most important are those of the National Revolutionary Movements up to 1912 and the documents of the Movement for Independent National Church.
 - Personal and family fonds of famous revolutionaries and figures from the political, public, cultural, economic and artistic life of Bulgaria of the 19th-21st century.
 - Archives relating to the building of the modern state, such as the archives of the Parliament and of Prince Alexander Battenberg.
 - Documents of Bulgarian political emigration after 1944.
- [Oriental Department](#). The manuscripts form the largest Oriental collection in the country, comprising items from the 11th-19th century. Essential part of the collections came from the former holdings of the 18th-19th -century waqf libraries on Bulgarian territory.
 - About 3200 mss. in Arabic, with prevailing works on Muslim law and grammar.
 - c. 500 mss. in Ottoman-Turkish, mainly on subjects of the Islamic religion.
 - c. 150 volumes in Persian; prevailing copies of the most prominent medieval Persian. Authors' poems with comments in Turkish. The earliest manuscript is from A.D.1017, a copy from the hadiths - *al-Jami' al-Sahih* of Muhammad al-Bukhari (810-870). Most valuable is the 1556 copy of al-Idrisi's *Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi'khtiraq al-afaq* [*Book for Entertainment of the One Longing to Cross the Countries Wide and Far*].
 - The Oriental Archive Collection, comprising 8692 archive units, text documents and registers (defters) from the 15th-19th century, Ottoman firmans. – Settlement Collections with 328 fonds named after important administrative centres in the Ottoman Empire and according to countries; includes the main bulk of the Ottoman documents and refers to all provinces of the Empire from almost the whole period of its existence.
 - The Register (Defter) Collection, consisting of 722 detailed and short registers, original registers and their copies, maintained by the state; it refers to all provinces in the Empire. Thematically the documents are divided into timar registers, yoklama, vakif, cizye, emlak, mukataa, nufus registers, income registers etc. Over 25 000 frames were acquired after the agreement for cooperation with Bashbakanlik Osmanli Arshivi. These copies of defters contain new complex information about the Balkan Peninsula in the period from the middle of 15th-19th century.

[Church-Historical and Archival Institute, Sofia \(CHAI\)](#)

The establishment of the St. Synod of Bulgarian Orthodox Church goes back to the year 1871. In 1896 a decision was taken according to which the small Synodal library began to accumulate

old books and manuscripts from the eparchies on Bulgarian territory. Thus in the library entered manuscripts from Etropole and Bachkovo monasteries as well as numerous manuscripts from the churches and monasteries on the territory of Sofia and Vratsa . The Institute was founded in 1974 as auxiliary unit at the Bulgarian Patriarchate with the purpose to keep and study its documentation.

- Manuscripts:
 - c. 375 Slavonic mss. of the 12/13th -19th century.
 - c. 217 Greek mss. of the 10th-19th century.
 - c. hundred manuscripts in other languages (including Karamanli language).
- Archives: The archival documents reflect the history and activity of St. Synod in Bulgaria; the main part of them however have been moved to the State Archive before the Institute was established, therefore its collection comprises documents of less historical value than those kept in the State Archive.
 - About 2000 letters, documents and photographs from the Bulgarian Revival period.
 - 300 unprocessed files containing documents from the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Ivan Dujčev Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies, at St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University (CSBS/SU). Email: centre_dujcev@abv.bg.

Established in 1986 as an independent unit at the Rectorate of SU, in accordance with the last will of the academician Ivan Dujčev. Collections:

- Manuscripts:
 - More than 70 Slavonic manuscripts from the 14th (one fragment) to the 19th century. The collection unites the former manuscript collection of the University Library and the archival heritage of I. Dujčev and the painter and art historian Prof. Asen Vasiliev.
 - About 500 Greek manuscripts from the 10th-19th century, the main part coming from the Prodom Monastery near Serres and Kosinitza (Eikosifoinitsa) Monastery near Drama (Greece).
 - About 200 Oriental and bi- and three-language manuscripts.
- Archives: The personal and scholarly archives of I. Dujčev, A. Vasiliev, Prof. Velizar Velkov and others. Their correspondence comprises 20 000 letters, other documents reflect the scientific expeditions and other activities of SU.

Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia (SA/BAS)

The Archive was given the status of an independent scientific division of BAS in 1994. It holds papers from 100 Academy divisions and over 380 individuals. The institutional papers include the documentation of BAS up to and after 1947. The Archive also possesses about 2,600 (possibly more) microfilms and microforms of valuable documents and manuscripts, including collections outside the country (e.g. the Collection of MS microfilms from Sinai). Collections include:

- 118 Slavonic manuscripts; from the 11th-19th century, among which the Resen Triodion (Resen Fragment / Folio) of the late 11th century, Bitolja Triodion of the early 13th century and the Psalter of King Ioann Alexander of 1337
- Manuscripts of scholarly papers
- Manuscripts of articles, studies and monographs from the Musical collection
- Personal funds of renowned scholars, academicians, poets, writers, etc.
- Personalalia, biographies etc. of BAS members
- Historical documents - varia
- Literary collection

Archives State Agency, Sofia (ASA)

Founded in 1951 as the Archival Office at the Ministry of Inner Affairs. Its present status and name followed from the Act for the National Archive Fonds accepted in 2007. Performs the national policy of collecting, preserving, organising and usage of archival documents. The Central State Archives (CSA) is a department of ASA. In 2003

it held 2163 institutional archives, 1782 private archives and 1738 archival deposits. In CSA are preserved:

- State Office holdings: Papers from legislative, executive and legal power bodies like Monarchical institute, Regency, Presidency of People's Republic of Bulgaria, People's Republic of Bulgaria President's administration, National assembly, Council of Ministers, Ministries, Supreme court, Main prosecutor's office. Here are the originals of the relics of the Third Bulgarian state like Tarnovo constitution (1879) and the Manifest for the Bulgarian independency proclamation (22nd September 1908). – Papers from finance and economic institutions; cultural, educational and scientific institutions; religious institutions (Bulgarian Exarchate, Holy Synod of Bulgarian orthodox church, Bachkovo and Troyan monasteries, Main office of a mufti, Central consistory of Jews).
- Holdings from social-political organizations: political parties; organizations, connected with the Bulgarian's struggle for national liberation and union.
- Holdings from eminent individuals: social and political workers; workers of National Liberation and Union movements; economic workers; cultural, scientific and technical workers; representatives of Church clergy.

CSA is also the national repository for copies of documents kept in foreign archives which concern Bulgarian history from the Middle Ages, the Ottoman rule and the modern times. Divided into 39 collections according to countries, they comprise almost 3,5 millions reproductions of documents, found in archival depositories and libraries in USA, Austria, Russia, Great Britain, France, Germany, the Vatican etc. The most numerous are the copies of documents from the end of 19th c. and from the last century. They refer to the entire spectrum of Bulgaria's inter-governmental relationships. CSA also holds collections of copies of unique old documents from the 14th-19th century: Slav, Greek, Latin, Ottoman Turkish, Western European and other manuscripts, charts and old navigation maps.

Ivan Vazov Regional National Library, Plovdiv (IVRNL)

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Established in 1879 through the initiative of Ioakim Gruev, a renown teacher and public figure from the Revival period. The library is the second largest in Bulgaria, with the functions of second national depository of Bulgarian literacy.

- Special collections division: 177 Slavonic mss. from 12th-19th century, 52 Greek mss., 31 Ottoman-Turkish, 86 Arabic, and 7 other-language-manuscripts. The oldest Slavonic mss. are the Slepče Apostolos of the late 12th century and the Kjustendil palimpsest of the late 12th or early 13th century.
- Bulgarian Historical Archive, with more than 11.000 documents from the 17th-20th century. Among the most valuable are the fonds of Ioakim Gruev, Nikolai Pavlovich, Dr Alexander Peev, the Eastern Rumelia Fund.

Rila Monastery (RM)

The monastery was restored in c. 1450, which could be regarded as the founding date of the present library. Its first acquisitions were the medieval manuscripts rescued from the capital Tarnovo after its fall under the Ottomans in 1393.

- Slavonic manuscripts: 180 items from the 11th-19th century. The oldest manuscript is the glagolitic fragment (Rila Glagolitic Folia) of the Paraenesis of Ephrem (Ephraim) the Syrian. Part of the Slavonic manuscripts represent the rescued heritage of Tarnovo Literary School of the 14th century. Of special interest are the manuscripts representing the Tarnovo Literary School, the 15th century manuscripts of Vladislav the Grammarian, the manuscripts written in and for the monastery in the 15th-18th century and the manuscripts of musical content, representing the famous Rila School of Singing of the 19th century.
- Greek manuscripts: form a relatively small collection in which the greatest number of codices are from the 18th-19th centuries, of mainly musical content, some of which are bi-lingual; there are also writings on the Church history, Greek Grammar books, one

- treatise on Canonic Law and the Greek-Bulgarian dictionary of Neophyte of Rila, a prominent man of letters (1790-1881);
- Archives: The documents reflect the history of the monastery, the oldest and most precious one being the parchment Charter of King Ivan Shishman issued in 1378 to confirm the possessions and privileges of the monastery. Among the documents of the 15th-17th century are the contract between Rila Monastery and St. Panteleimon (Roussikon) Monastery on Mount Athos, the letters for financial support and correspondingly, the charters issued by Russian kings. Many documents come from the time of the Ottoman rule, of which the earliest is an order to keep the rights of the monastery, issued in 1402 in Plovdiv. A firman of 1498, issued in Tsarigrad (Istanbul) protects the monastery against the disrespect demonstrated by the Turkish spahi (the cavalry). By another firman from 1508, signed by Sultan Bayazid II, "Rila mountain" was gifted to his Great Vezir Kara Mustafa under the condition that the local population will be free from some of the taxes.