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**THE LARGEST ARMENIAN MANUSCRIPT
THE JARRENDIR OF MUSH (LECTIONARY OF MUSH)
1202 AD
(1917-2021)**

Prologue

One hundred and three years ago in the Monastery of the Holy Apostles of Mush the huge “*Lectinary of Mush*” was discovered miraculously on the floor of the convent following the persecutions of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks during the 1915 Genocide. It was not only the Genocide of the Armenian people that devastated our nation, but also that of thousands of Armenian parchment manuscripts, fallen victim by the Turks during World War I that tried to destroy our centuries-old culture. In the midst of a total destruction the famous “*Jarrendir of Mush*,” the largest and the heaviest of all Armenian parchment manuscripts of all times, known as the “**Lectinary** of Mush,” was found on the floor when two brave women saved and carried it with them. The “*Lectinary*” was used in the Armenian Church on yearly basis, containing sermons and lives of the martyrs for daily worship, known also as “*Annual Lectinary*,” with hundreds of highly regarded artistic illustrations.

The Parchment Manuscript

This huge volume, originally with 660 parchment folios, measuring 70 by 55 cm. each, was hand-written in 1202 AD, as reported in the main colophon of the Book. It was kept in the Monastery of the Holy Apostles in Mush until 1917. In 1204, as we read in the colophon, the *Jarrendir of Mush* was stolen from Erzenjan by a Turk judge in Babert and soon was sold to the Monastery of the Holy Apostles for 4,000 silvers, raised by the inhabitants of Mush and the clergy of the Monastery. Seven centuries later the odyssey of this unique and most precious *Jarrendir* began. In 1917 the volume was considered stolen from the Monastery after 700 years of safety, as the members of the convent could not locate the Large Book anywhere in the monastic premises. Soon, two Armenian exiled emigrant women, who spent an overnight in the Monastery on their way to the Syrian deserts, noticed a large book left on the floor, not knowing what it was. Because of its unusual size and weight, they decided to divide the book into two, and take the one half with them, and wrap the other safely in one of their coats to be buried in the Armenian Church yard in Erzeroum.

The Destiny

The brave women continued their way both as emigrants and as “pilgrims.” Arriving in Tbilisi, Georgia, they handed the half of the *Jarrendir* to the Armenian Ethnographic Society. Two years later, somehow, the second half of this Miracle Book “resurrected” from its burial site and reunited with its twin brother. Today, the reunited *Jarrendir of Mush* is the pride of the Armenian people, the Armenian Church, and above all, the privilege of Mesrob Mashtots Matenadaran, the Depository of Ancient Armenian Manuscripts of Yerevan, where it is displayed under its classified number 7721, as the **largest** among the thousands, hugging the smallest

manuscript on its bosom.

The History

As said earlier, the Book originally contained 660 parchment folios, but as it shows today the number of the folios are 601. From those remaining, 17 folios are treasured in the Mekhitarist Monastery in Venice and one folio with the Brotherhood in Vienna. Later, in 1977, the Matenadaran of Yerevan acquired two folios from the Lenin Library of Moscow and attached them to the Book. According to manuscript scholars and specialists each folio was the skin of a calf, and accordingly over 600 calves sacrificed their lives and sanctified their skins as parchments on which the Armenian *yerghatagir* scripts still shine since 1202 AD. The scribe is named in the main colophon as Vartan Garnetsi who worked diligently for three years and accomplished it in 1202, some 820 years ago in the Avag Monastery of Erzenjan. The artistic illustrations as recorded in the same colophon were rendered by Stepanos the Illustrator, by the orders of Asdvadzatur, chief of the city of Babert.

As for the rescue of the second half of the *Jarrendir of Mush*, it was by a sheer accident and out of the blue sky as it were that in 1919 was put on sale in Baku, where a Polish military officer sold the unknown parchment volume to the Armenian Benevolent Society, soon to be identified as the other half of the huge manuscript, now “risen” from the yard of the Armenian Church in Erzeroum. Since then the two twin brothers reunited forever.

The Victorious Manuscript

Today, one hundred and three years later, the Armenian nation reminisce the victory of one of the most unique resources of our national culture, one in its kind, a venture of unsurpassed pride for our Church of Armenia and Nation, following a torturous exile, and yet rescued by two brave women whose names even remain unknown to us, but surely written in the Heavenly Book.

REVD. DR. ZAVEN ARZOUMANIAN

