

# MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER NOMINATION FORM

## Turkey – The works of Ibn Sina in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library

### PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

#### 1 SUMMARY

Abu Ali al-Hussain Ibn Abdallah Ibn al-Hassan Ibn al-Ali Ibn Sina (980-1038), often known by his Latin name of Avicenna, has been described as possessing the mind of Goethe and the genius of Leonardo da Vinci. European medical historians consider him to be one of the most famous scientists of Islam and one of the most famous persons of all races, places and times. Ibn Sina was not only a great physician and scientist but a philosopher as well. He also contributed into the fields such as psychology, geology, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy and logic. Today, Ibn Sina's portrait hangs in the main hall of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Paris.

The works of Ibn Sina that have come down to us are considerable, even if not complete. For some, Ibn Sina wrote about 450 works of which around 240 have survived. G.C. Anawati lists, in his bibliography of 1950, a total of 276 works including texts noted as doubtful and some apocryphal works. Yahya Mahdawi lists 131 authentic and 110 doubtful works in "Bibliographie d'I.S." in 1954.

The Süleymaniye Manuscript Library in Istanbul is known to be possessing the manuscript copies of all the survived works of Ibn Sina. Some of them are dated as far back as 11<sup>th</sup> century. Some 600 manuscripts of Ibn Sina's works in the Süleymaniye Library naturally includes considerable number of copies, however, among them 263 manuscripts have different titles. Hence the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library is known to be the only library in the world that is accommodating the manuscript copies of all the survived works of Ibn Sina. Almost all these works of Ibn Sina were written in Arabic, the language of religion and scientific expression in the entire Muslim World at that time.

Ibn Sina's works in the Süleymaniye Library can be accepted valuable since they are all unique as manuscripts even if they were the copies of existing manuscripts. Besides, some of them are precious because of their calligraphic styles, illuminations, miniatures, illustrations and bindings.

Taken as a whole, Ibn Sina's works in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library may be said to be invaluable as such that their significance is deemed to transcend the boundaries of time and culture, and therefore they should be preserved for present and future generations. In fact, today this collection of manuscripts are widely used by Turkish and foreign scholars.

#### 2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

##### 2.1 Name

The nomination is a joint decision of,

- The General Directorate of Libraries and Publications, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Turkey
- The Turkish National Commission for UNESCO.

##### 2.2 Relationship

- The General Directorate of Libraries and Publications is in charge of the administration of public libraries within the domain of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey. The Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, however, being

an important part of the documentary heritage of Turkey, is also under the administration of the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications.

- The relation of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO for the nomination process is through the Sub-Committee on Libraries, Archives and Documentation.

### 2.3 Contact Persons

As the nomination is a joint decision of the parties mentioned above, the contact persons are:

Mr Dursun Öztürk - The General Director of Libraries and Publications, The Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Prof. Dr. Arsin Aydınuraz – The President, The Turkish National Commission for UNESCO

### 2.4 Contact Details

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## 3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

### 3.1 Name and Identification: The Works of Ibn Sina in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library

**Owner:** The General Directorate of Libraries and Publications, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, The Republic of Turkey

**Address:** Necatibey Caddesi, No. 55 06440 Kızılay-Ankara/TURKEY

**Custodian:** The Directorate of Süleymaniye Manuscript Library (It is a public institution)

**Address:** Ayşe Kadın Mah. Hamam Sokak, No: 35  
Eminönü-Istanbul/TURKEY

### 3.2 Description

The works of Ibn Sina in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library consists of 263 separate titles, but with the manuscript copies it reaches to about 600, some being small treatises. The breakdown of Ibn Sina's works in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library by subject is as follows:

Philosophy	: 89
Logic	: 11
Philosophy of Religion	: 53
Mysticism	: 5
Linguistic Works	: 2
Literature	: 12
Mathematics	: 7
Physics	: 2
Chemistry	: 2
Medicine	: 58

Politics	: 1
Geography	: 1
Astronomy	: 7

They are all manuscripts; some contain illuminations, some have thematic drawings and some have unique bindings. Most of the works of Ibn Sina, which carry a copy date, have been written between 1022 and 1728. A copy of “Al-Shifa” even carries the hand written approval of Ibn Sina. Though it may be stated that these works of Ibn Sina in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library is not complete, however, this collection of Ibn Sina is known to be the richest in the world.

These manuscript works have universal value, not only in terms of many fields of learning as they have contributed to the development of humanity, but also in terms of their aesthetic and stylistic characteristics.

### **Bibliographic/Registration Details**

The bibliographic data of the works of Ibn Sina can be found in the main card catalogue of the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library. Catalogue cards contains information on the manuscript number, the special collection number, title, author, folio number, copyist (if mentioned), dimensions and calligraphic style of each book. The work on the creation of OPAC, and digitalization of the works are in progress. When completed, the project will enable the user to make his search not only by title, date and copiest, but also by their aesthetic characteristics.

### **History**

Though there is no dispute about where Ibn Sina was born or died, his origin is open to discussion. Yet according to his own words in his famous “Al-Qanun Fi'l Tibb” (Vol:2) it will not be a far-fetched assumption to accept him as a Turk. The fact that he wrote mostly in Arabic is due to nothing but his desire to abide with the existing unwritten rule of the era: the language of the religion was the language of science since both aimed to be understood universally. Consequently, Latin was used for scholarly works in the Christian World, while Arabic was the common language used by muslim scholars.

Ibn Sina was so famous that he was entitled “Al-Shaikh A-Ra'is” (The Chief Teacher) by his compatriots or just “Shaikh” by his disciples. His works gradually filtered to Europe where they were received with the same enthusiasm. “Al-Qanun Fi'l Tibb” is the work that inspired the European scholars to call him the “Medicorum Principes”.

The number of works of Ibn Sina in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library totals nearly 600. They are mostly ancient copies dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century on. One of them was read and approved by Ibn Sina himself.

The works of Ibn Sina originally were parts of smaller special collections. In time most of them were collected and added to the main collection of the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library.

Being manuscripts they are all unique and therefore valuable in a sense. But some of them are adorned with miniatures, illuminations, gilded bindings so well that they are accepted invaluable.

(For further information see 3.2 and 4.3)

### **Visual Documentation**

Photocopies and CD copy of some pages from various copies of “Al-Qanun Fi'l Tibb” (See: Annex 3-4-5) as well as the bibliography of the collection (See: Annex 1) and

pictures of Ibn Sina (See: Annex 2abc) are attached to the application as visual documentation.

### **Bibliography**

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- “Türkiye İslami Tıp Yazmaları Kataloğu: Arapça, Türkçe ve Farsça – A Catalogue of Islamic Medical Manuscripts in the Libraries of Turkey: Arabic, Turkish and Persian”. Ed.: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Haz.: R.Şeşen, C.Akpınar ve C. İzgi. İstanbul: İslam Tarih, Sanat ve Kültür Araştırma Merkezi, 1984.

### **Referees**

- Prof. Dr. Esin Kahya. University of Ankara, Faculty of Letters, Dept.of History of Science. Ankara-Turkey
- Dr. Nevzat Kaya. Director of Süleymaniye Manuscript Library. İstanbul-Turkey.

## **4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

- 4.1** The collection of works of İbn Sina, totalling 263 separate titles (with copies nearly 600 volumes) are all manuscripts; they are authentic, unique, and invaluable. One of

the copies of “Al-Shifa” is believed to have the authorization signature of Ibn Sina himself. ( The copy of “Al Shifa” located within the special collection of Damat Ibrahim Pasha in the main collection, No:822” is dated 1022/23 AD, which coincides with the time of Ibn Sina).

**4.2** Ibn Sina, the eminent scientist, philosopher, pharmacologist, theorist, poet and successful politician of Turkish origin is mostly known as a clinician under his Latin name “Avicenna”. He also was a prolific writer and wrote a large number of books, essays and treatises. Many of his books, but especially the medical encyclopedia “Al Qanun fi’l Tibb” (The Canon of Medicine) was translated into Latin and other Western languages. The Canon was taught between 1400 and 1600 AD as the main medical text in various medical schools in Europe.

A good size of his writings is housed in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library; being perhaps the most richest collection in the world. Moreover the collection is invaluable from the points of having early dates and illuminated works.

This collection includes his many works on philosophy. “ Kitab-al Shifa” (The Book of Remedy) has 32 copies. “Kitab al-Nacat” (the Book of Deliverance) and “Isharat” also are famous works where his ideas on physics and music, which he classified among mathematical sciences, can be found. There are also many other short treatises, where he explains his views on epistemology, ontology, theology and metaphysics. Also his correspondence with the world famous philosopher Al Biruni is part of the collection.

In the collection there are also many medical works, some of them with many copies. For example “Al Qanun fi’l Tibb” has 58 copies. There are also translations of his encyclopedic 5-volume-work into Ottoman Turkish and Latin.

The Latin version carries the date 1510 and includes a picture of a crowned Ibn Sina, between Galenius and Hippocrates on the cover, which proves the importance given (“the Prince of Physicians” and “A Giant in Pharmacology”) to this great scientist during that era. (see: Darmani, N. A. and Annex: 2a)

The 5 volumes ( 1- General principles of physiology and hygiene 2- Simple drugs and their effects covering more than 800 plants, 3 and 4- Pathology: Diseases 5- Drugs and remedies) are fully represented in the collection.

**4.3(a) Time**

Manuscripts both in prose and verse dates back to 11<sup>th</sup> century. A copy of “Al-Shifa”, which claims to have the approval signature of Ibn Sina himself, definitely belongs to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

**4.3(b) Place**

The place of the creation of the items in the collection varies. Those written in Arabic, Persian and Ottoman are created in the Islamic world; while those translated into Latin and other languages are created in different parts of the world.

**4.3(c) People**

The intellectual part of the collection belongs to one person, namely Ibn Sina. .

**4.3(d) Subject and Theme**

See 3.2 and 4.2

**4.3(e) Form and style**

So far as the added values are concerned the collection include many invaluable thematic drawings, probably drawn by Ibn Sina himself.

Other than that, many copies have beautiful illuminations, special bindings, etc. Examples are provided at the attached Annex 3, 4, 5.  
(For further information please see 4.2)

#### **4.4(a) Rarity**

This collection is extremely important as it houses a number of unique and rare manuscripts on various subjects dating back to 11<sup>th</sup> century. Also a copy of “Al-Shifa” is claimed to carry the authorization of Ibn Sina himself.

#### **4.4(b) Integrity**

Most of the manuscripts are in good condition and those which are damaged in some way are being restored in the Book Pathology Center established in the Library.

#### **4.4(c) Threat**

The manuscript collections are in no immediate danger. But for the survival of them, and for the use of future generations, Book Pathology Center should be enlarged, modernized and needs to be equipped well.

#### **4.4(d) Management**

See section 6.

### **5 LEGAL INFORMATION**

#### **5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage**

The General Directorate of Libraries and Publications, Ministry of Culture and Tourism

#### **5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage**

The Directorate of Süleymaniye Manuscript Library  
Ayşe Kadın Mahallesi, Hamam Sokak, No: 35  
Eminönü-İstanbul / TURKEY

#### **5.3 Legal Status**

- a) The Directorate of Süleymaniye Manuscript Library is a public institution
- b) The collection of manuscripts is preserved in accordance with the regulations issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Accession to the collection is subject to the permission of the administration.
- c) The collection of manuscripts are subject to the copyright issues of the Turkish laws and regulations.
- d) The Directorate of Süleymaniye Manuscript Library is legally responsible for safekeeping of the collection.

### **6 MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Library is open every day (except on Sundays) from 8.30 to 16.30. With the exception of damaged and unique materials, all the works are accessible by Turkish and foreign scholars in the reading rooms. The damaged and unique materials may be accessed only through their microform copies. Up to now 5000 manuscripts have been copied on to microfilm; digitalization of the manuscripts collection is going on with great speed.

The collection of manuscripts are kept in special stacks where the humidity is controlled at 50-60 percent and the temperature is kept at 15-18 centigrade. There are steel boxes to protect damaged and unique materials.

The Süleymaniye Manuscript Library possesses a recently built annex specially designed for the preservation, restoration and conservation of manuscripts. Preservation costs are included in the annual budget appropriated to the Library by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

**7.1** The nomination of the works of Ibn Sina in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library for its inclusion in the Memory of the World as a documentary heritage is a joint decision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO.

The parties concerned reached to this decision having consulted the leading scholars and specialists.

## **PART B - SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION**

### **ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

**7.2** The Collection, as a whole, is in good condition, and preserved well. Yet, further measures should be taken against natural and human disasters. Fire and earthquake on the one hand, theft and humiliation of manuscripts (such as cutting off the miniatures etc) on the other, should seriously be taken into consideration.

## **8 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

**8.1** The collection control is exercised with care. Storage environments are adequate if not ideal. The preservation activities are carried out with a limited number of personnel available. The Library is also in need of qualified personnel for restoration process. The Book Pathology Center is to be enlarged, modernized and well-equipped in order to take care of manuscripts and to give in-service training to those who are in need.

## **PART C – LODGEMENT**

This nomination is lodged by,  
Prof. Dr. Arsin Aydınuraz  
The President  
The Turkish National Commission for UNESCO

### **ANNEXES**

Annex 1	: The works of Ibn Sina in Süleymaniye Manuscript Library
Annex 2a	: The Cover of Latin Translation of “Al-Qanun Fi’l Tıbb” (1510) depicting Ibn Sina as the king and Galeneus and Hippocrates as princes
Annex 2b,c	: Portraits of Ibn Sina
Annex 3a, b	: Covers of gilded bindings of “Al-Qanun Fi’l Tıbb”
Annex 3c	: First page of “Al Qanun Fi’l Tıbb”
Annex 4a,b	: Covers of gilded bindings of “Al-Qanun Fi’l Tıbb”
Annex 4c	: Title page of “Al Qanun Fi’l Tıbb”
Annex 4d	: First page of “Al Qanun Fi’l Tıbb”

- Annex 5a : Cover of gilded binding of “Al Qanun Fi’l Tıbb”  
Annex 5b,c,d : Some illuminations from “Al Qanun Fi’l Tıbb”  
Annex 5e, f, g,h,i : Illiminated first pages of some chapters.

**Prepared by  
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