PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1 SUMMARY

Astan Quds Razavi is one of the oldest charity organisations in the world with a historical precedence of at least 327 years for document keeping. This Organisation is therefore active since 938 AD. This religious foundation now consists of more than 1000 staff members, 100 economic institutions, a big library containing 60 thousand manuscripts, an archive with some 6 million documents, two universities and a big centre for Islamic studies.

In the early Safavid era, due to an increase in endowments- mainly lands and farmlands- and the need for a more comprehensive administrative system, this big charity organisation underwent a change in the administrative system, moving from a simple initial form to a big administrative complex. The documents now nominated for inscription on the Memory of the World Register are in fact administrative documents of this big charity organisation (Astan-e Quds Razavi) that date back to the Safavid era. This collection consists of 69 thousand pages and falls within the date range of 1589 AD-1735 AD (1000-1148 Lunar Calendar). The variety and size of the endowments at the time were such that the nominated documents cover a vast geographical area including Iran, especially Khorasan province, and Afghanistan. These documents can boast being one of the most organised and biggest collections remaining from an administrative system in the Safavid era. In addition to the above-mentioned parts, Astan-e Quds Razavi also consisted of a holy shrine, hospital, special place for making cool fruit juice and drinking fruit juice, treasury, religious school, library and guesthouse.

A thematic classification of the nominated documents reveals the five following categories:

- Social: the social context considers such issues as floods, earthquakes, drought, peoples’ living conditions and public professions;
- Finance and Administrative: this field covers information about staff members’ salaries, posts and titles, payable amounts, bills, judgements/orders, purchase agreements, family trees, scrolls, documentary evidences signed and sealed by witnesses / an affidavit, incomes (owrajeh), Payments (Towjihat) and notebooks for documenting daily events (Rooz-Namche);
- Economic and Agricultural: these documents cover information about farmer-owner relationships and amendments to that including shortcomings or temporary inability to work (Noqsan), long-term inability to work due to, for instance, failure in mills etc. (Ta’til), sell and purchase (Mobaye Nameh), deed of compromise, rules and regulations related to the payment of one-tenth of incomes (Ashr and Dahnim), granting the income and/or transferring the payable tax of an area (Sivarqal) and evaluating the price(s) of commodities (Taseer Namcheh);
- Military: military occupations, salaries of the military and handling border affairs;
- Religious: religious schools, religious leaders and information related to religious teachers and descendants of the holy Prophet (Sadats).

3. DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1 Name (person or organisation)
National Committee for the Memory of the World

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated
The National Committee for the Memory of the World proposes all nominations for inscription on the Memory of the World Register.

2.3 Contact person (s)
Ali Akbar Ashari

3.1 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)
Organisation: National Committee for the Memory of the World
Title: President, Iranian National Library and Archives Centre
Chair, Iranian National Committee for the Memory of the World
Office Address: National Library Blvd., Haghani Free Way, Tehran-Iran
Islamic Republic of Iran National Library
Tel (Office): (+98-21) 88 64 40 70
Fax(Office): (+98-21) 88 64 40 72
Mobile: (+98) 912 42 67 736
E-mail: memory@nlai.ir

3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated
Administrative Documents of Astan-e Quds Razavi in the Safavid Era.

This collection is in 69 thousand pages including documents from the time of Shah Abbass I (1589 AD) through to Shah Abbass II (1735 AD). These documents bear reference to a variety of topics including incomes (Owrajeh), Payments (Towjihat), notebook for documenting daily events (Rooz-Namche) with each having their own sub-branches and all of great organisational value. The papers are of a beige colour in the size of 15×20cm, most of which are written in “Siaq” handwriting, typical of official financial documents of the time.

3.2 Description

This collection of documents bears information on administrative, social, economic, agricultural, endowment, religious and … issues. It in fact provides the reader with an image of Mashhad in Khorasan Province as well as the status of social life in the Safavid era.
In those times, “Motevalli” or Head of Astan-e Quds Razavi, was known to be the direct deputy of the Safavid kings, who had control over all affairs on behalf of the King. “Motevalli” had extensive interactions with other governmental and religious representatives including the jury, grand religious teacher and the governor. The important role “Motevalli” had to play in the region and the strategic importance of Khorasan in the east angle of the Country and in Central Asia, led to the development of a wide range of military, social and political documents all of which were preserved in Astan-e Quds Razavi for its renown. One could therefore conclude that this religious centre was in fact the manifestation of the King’s power and influence in eastern parts of Iran. As an example of the power of Astan-e Quds in those days reference could be made to the payment of the militaries’ salaries by this Organisation.
Although this centre is home to more than 50 thousand pages of documents of the Afsharid Dynasty and some 100 thousand pages of documents of the Qajar Dynasty, documents of the Safavid era bear greater significance for their rarity.
Even though little study has been conducted on these documents, research carried out by a number of renowned international and national researchers reveal the importance of these documents for any research related to the Safavid Era.

4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

The evaluation made is of a comparative and relative nature and there exists no absolute criteria with regard to the cultural significance of the submitted document.
4.1 Is authenticity established
The authenticity of the submitted documents can be established considering the following:

- **Type of paper:** the paper used for documentation purposes is typical of the Safavid era bearing on the material used in their production and their place of production;
- **Font, terminology and letterheads:** the font, terminology and letterheads used for documentation purposes are all typical of the Safavid era and seen to be used in other documents remaining from that time including “Tazkerat-ol Molook” and “Dastoor-ol Molook”;
- **Stamps and signatures of the kings and governmental officials:** some of the submitted documents are stamped and signed by renowned figures of the Safavid era including Shah Abbass I, Shah Abbass II, Shah Safi, Shah Sulayman, Shah Sultan Hossien, “Motevallis” of Astan-e Quds, supervisors and religious teachers such as Sheikh Bahayei, Sheikh Horr Ameli, Religious Leader of Mashhad and other figures of significance in the Safavid era;
- **Subject and content:** the contents of the submitted documents and their topics of focus bear great similarity to other relevant documents of the Safavid era;
- **Occupations:** most occupations referred to in the submitted documents are of the type typical of the safavid era and include Motevalli, supervisor (nazer), Nurse (bimardar),Surgeon, Accountant and …;
- **Remaining letters of endowment:** the original copies of these letters of endowments bearing the stamps and signatures of high-ranking officials are of great informative importance. Examples of these documents are the letters of endowment of Shah Abbass Safavi, Abbass Gholi Khan Shamlou, and Atigh Ali Monshi.

4.2 Is world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established?
These documents contain important information on matters of social, anthropological and administrative importance; they bring genuine examples of peoples’ styles of speech, occupations, eating habits, dress codes, illnesses, levels of income, modalities of payment, natural disasters (floods, earthquakes, droughts etc.), that were less documented in different eras, especially in Iran. Unfortunately, despite the cultural and social significance of this period in the history of Iran and neighbouring countries, due to a devastation of some of the documents of the Safavid period in the event of the Afghan invasion of Iran there is not much documentary evidence left from that time. Thus, despite bearing information about a charity and religious organisation within a time span of 150 years, these documents bear great significance since they contain types of information about the Safavid period, other than the above-mentioned, that are not found in other sources. These documents also provide information on the formation of a world’s biggest charity foundation as well as its changes and transformations within a historical period of great significance and are considered unique in this respect.

4.3 Is one or more of the criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style satisfied?

a) **Time:** these documents belong to the time span of 1589 AD-1735 AD. The time they belong to is easily provable bearing on the reasons mentioned in the above paragraphs. Most information provided in these documents such as terminological information, administrative, economic and medical information, are unique to these documents and not found in any other source(s) of that era, thus attaching great importance to the submitted documents in comparison with other documents remaining from the Safavid period;

b) **Place:** the place of the formation of the submitted documents is Mashhad in Khorasan Province in the East of Iran. In those days, Mashhad was most significant due to its extensive relations with Central Asia and Afghanistan. Its strategic, cultural and economic importance had thus brought it due attention by great regional powers throughout history. This document bears reference to certain administrative terminology, titles and names of places such as villages, farmlands, gardens, neighbourhoods, religious schools, caravanserais,…, which now no longer exist and are seldom borne reference to in other documents;
c) People: another reason for the importance of these documents can be sought in the reference they bear to social and anthropological aspects of the Safavid era. Introduction to different social strata of the society, occupations and professions of the time, religious beliefs, social and religious groups, the role of women in the society, problems confronted with at that time (famine and drought), peoples’ living standards, eating habits and dress codes and administrative development, the study of which brings about an understanding of social development of the time, can be enumerated as most important reasons for the significance of the submitted documents;

d) Subject and Theme: The importance of both subject and theme of these documents rests in the fact that most information they contain is about items that are no longer existent today and thus provide the documents with a comprehensive nature. The terminology used, occupations referred to, financial and administrative systems, social elements of concern, cultural viewpoints and endowment related activities all of which are a proof to the specific ways of thought and social development of the Safavid era are either no longer seen, or given very limited reference to in other sources. The religious, social, administrative and governmental, medical, historical, geographic, literary, anthropological, and even nature-based content of the documents reveal the way of thought, its changes and developments in the Safavid society;

e) Form and style: a study of these documents reveals their capacity to familiarise researchers with the different literary systems used in governmental and social letters of their time. Titles used to refer to the recipients of letters, the letterheads used, writing style, financial system referred to etc. are unique to these documents and not found elsewhere. Orders, permits and scrolls also bear significant information of the Safavid era. Although most documents lack aesthetic importance, they are invaluable with regard to the extinct / rare information they contain.

4.4 Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management that relate to this nomination?

This collection of administrative and endowment-relevant documents is unique in Iran and the world over. It is unique in Iran because of the rarity of documents from the Safavid era and unique in the world because of the rarity of any comprehensive documentary evidence of such size about a charity and religious organization.

5 LEGAL INFORMATION

5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)
Name: Ali Mohammad
Surname: Baradaran Rafaei
Title of Owner: Head, Astan-e Quds Razavi Library, Archives and Museums Organisation
Office Address: Holy Shrine of Imam Ali Bin Musa al-Reza, Sheikh Tousi Quarter, Central Building, Mashhad, Iran
Tel (Office): (+98 – 511) 22 15 565
Fax (Office): (+98-511) 22 20 845

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)
Organisation: Astan-e Quds Razavi Library, Archives and Museums Organisation
Name of Custodian: Dr Ali Mohammad Baradaran Rafaei
Title of Custodian: Head, Astan-e Quds Razavi Library, Archives and Museums Organisation
Office Address: Holy Shrine of Imam Ali Bin Musa al-Reza, Sheikh Tousi Quarter, Central Building, Mashhad, Iran
Tel.(Office): (+98 – 511) 22 15 565
Tel: (98-511) 22 21 149
Fax (Office): (+98-511) 22 20 845

5.3 Legal status:
(a) Category of ownership: National

(b) Accessibility: accessibility is provided according to the rules and regulations of the Division for the Management of Documents

(c) Copyright status: copyright owned by Astan-e Quds Razavi Library, Archives and Museums Organisation

(d) Responsible administration: Mr Abolfazl Hassan Abadi

(e) Other factors: None

6 MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? YES/NO

If yes, attach a summary of the plan. If no, please attach further details about current storage and custody of the materials.

Bearing on the huge volume of the documents, the development of any management plan is quite costly. Thus, only certain managerial provisions have been taken account of to this date and others are under investigation. Management measures already taken are as follows:

 Preparation of CDs and scanning the documents;
 Illustrating the themes;
 Preparation of microfilms (under investigation);
 Preserving the documents from harm inflicted by pests / insects;
 Preparing a table of contents for the work;
 Restoration.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional Memory of the World committee

Up to the point of nominating the documents, more than 20 meetings were held at the Astan-e Quds Razavi Library, Archives and Museums Organisation, and with the National Committee for the Memory of the World.

PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK

8.1 Detail the nature and scope of threats to this documentary heritage (see 5.5)

a) The temperature and moisture of the place were the documents are kept have still not reached a standard and desirable level. Efforts are being made to remove this problem;

b) The documents are under restoration, but their huge volume and the time-consuming task of traditional restoration have altogether given way to the problem of shortage of time;

c) There is a lack of adequate security considerations and it is necessary to prepare more developed equipment for this purpose.

9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION

9.1 Detail the preservation context of the documentary heritage (see 3.3) This collection of 69 thousand pages is kept in propylene boxes and on steel shelves along with other old documents. Documents in each box are categorised according to their theme and kept away in the stockroom. The
temperature and moisture of the stockroom are not of a standard level, thus the documents are dusted in regular intervals. In addition to that, stockrooms are sprayed with insecticides occasionally and the documents are tested for any fungus-related disease.

**PART C - LODGEMENT**

This nomination is lodged by:

(Please print name)… Abolfazl Hassan Abadi

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(Signature)....................................... (Date)........................................