

# MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

A Collection of Nezami's *Panj Ganj*  
(Iran)

Ref N° 2010-07

## PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

### 1 SUMMARY

“*Panj Ganj*” also known as “*Khamseh*” is among the famous literary works of Iran attributed to *Nezami Ganjavi* (circa 530-619 in the lunar calendar / 1133-1222 AD). The nominated work is a collection of five versified stories entitled, “*Makhzan al-Asrar*” (Treasury of Secrets), “*Khosrow and Shirin*”, “*Layli and Majnoon*”, “*Haft Paykar*”(Seven Bodies/Seven Domes) and “*Eskandar Nameh*” (The Tale of Alexander), all derived from recognized narratives in Persian literature. Similar to Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings)- the most significant epic narrative in the Persian literature- Nezami's *Khamseh* is an account of the most popular and well-liked romantic narratives in the Persian language.

Nezami's style adopted in recounting the romantic and delicate narratives of *Khamseh*, has marked this work as a masterpiece of Persian literature, making it a model for most Persian-speaking poets. *Khamseh*'s romantic stories have not only maintained their fame along the vast geographical showground of the Persian language –from India to Central Asia, Caucasia and Anatolia- but the simple and fluent language of the poems as well as their skilful choice of diction and expressions is still easily comprehensible for and legible by Persian-speakers.

*Panj Ganj* is among those of the Persian literary works in which painters have invested great interest with regards to illustrating its attractive and well-loved stories. The artistic talent of Iranian artists has given birth to a choice of great works of art emanating from Nezami's masterpiece. In this view, manuscripts prepared from Nezami's *Khamseh* are known to be among the largest artistic and simply written manuscripts of any literary work in the libraries of Iran and the world over. In addition to various reprints of Nezami's *Khamseh* in Iran and other countries, this collection has been translated into the German, Russian, English, French, Japanese, Turkish, Urdu and Armenian languages. It has also been the subject of various research projects and various scientific papers.

The present form is thus completed to nominate *Panj Ganj* and its five distinguished manuscripts on the Memory of the World Register.

### 2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

- 2.1 Name (person or organisation)  
National Committee for the Memory of the World (Iranian National Commission for UNESCO).
- 2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated  
All nominations for inscriptions are made by the National Committee for the Memory of the World of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.
- 2.3 Contact person (s)  
Ali Akbar Asha'ri (Mr), Chair of the National Committee for the Memory of the World of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.
- 2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

**Entity:** National Committee for the Memory of the World of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.

**Organisational Post:** Head, National Library and Archives of Iran and Chair of the National Committee for the Memory of the World of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.

**Postal Address (Office):** National Library and Archives of Iran, National Library Blvd., Haghani Highway, Tehran, Iran.

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**Office:** (+98) 21 88 64 40 70

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### 3 **IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE**

#### 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

**Name:** Nezami's *Panj Ganj* consisting of five separate sections entitled, "*Makhzan al-Asrar*" (Treasury of Secrets), "*Khosrow and Shirin*", "*Layli and Majnoon*", "*Haft Paykar*" (Seven Bodies) and "*Eskandar Nameh*" (The Tale of Alexander).

#### 3.2 Description

*Panj Ganj* or *Khamseh* consists of five versified story in the Persian language all gathered in a single volume. These sections are all versified in the form of long poems with rhymed couplets, or *Mathnavi* as expressed in the Persian language. *Khamseh* recounts the most celebrated, delicate and oldest romantic stories of the Persian language.

A short description of each section is as follows:

1. *Makhzan al-Asrar* (Treasury of Secrets):

This section is narrated in the name of Malek Fakhroddin Bahram Shah from the Turkmen Mengojek dynasty of Azerbaijan in 572HD/1176AD. *Makhzan al-Asrar* includes 2263 couplets and 20 essays each of which contains a single story. Poems in this section are of a mystical and ethical nature. This section, indicating Nezami's spiritual and inner emotions and state, is for the most part focused on acquiring self-knowledge and heeding the heart.

2. *Khosrow and Shirin*:

This section is narrated in the names of Abu-taleb Toqrol Bin Arsalan the Saljuqid King (573-590 HD/1177- 1194 AD) and Atabak Shamsoddin Mohammad Ildgaz (581-587 HD/ 1185-1191 AD). Narration of this section took place within the years 573 to 576 HD/ 1177 to 1180 AD. The section consists of 6512 couplets. *Khosrow and Shirin* recounts one of the most well-liked love stories in Persian culture and literature- the story of khosrow Parviz, the Sasanid king of Iran, and Shirin, an Armenian princess. Unlike *Makhzan al-Asrar* that recounts mystical and intellectual properties of human nature, *Khsorow and Shirin* is a love story narrated for the people. The story of *Khosrow and Shirin* had also been told in old history books, but Nezami's recounting of the tale made it eternal among the people.

3. *Layli and Majnoon*:

The section on Layli and Majnoon was completed after *Khosrow and Shirin* by Nezami in 584 HD/ 1188 AD. On the request of Shervanshah Akhestan Bin Manouchehr, an ascendant of Bahram Shah Choubin of the Sasanid dynasty according to Iranian historians, this section was transformed into poetry in 4718 couplets. This section, a tale with an unhappy ending, recounts the love story between Majnoon, an Arab youth, and Layli;. The

concepts Nezami used to demonstrate Majnoon's feelings and recount his prayers to the Almighty reveal a most delicate and unmatched choice of diction.

4. *Haft paykar* or *Haft Gonbad* (Seven Bodies / Seven Domes):

This section was versified by Nezami in the name of Sultan Ala'a Dowleh Aghsonghori, ruler of Maraqa, in 593 HD/ 1197 AD. *Haft Paykar* is a collection of 5136 couplets, which recount the tale of a Sasanid king, Bahram Goor, along with seven stories that seven princesses narrated for Bahram Goor in seven palaces. Given its application of outstanding concepts of aesthetic value, this section of the *Khamseh* is considered its finest section.

5. *Eskandar Nameh* (The Tale of Alexander):

This section is a collection of 10500 couplets and consists of two separate parts entitled, "*Sharaf Nameh*" and "*Iqbal Nameh*" or "*Khirad Nameh*". This story recounts the tale of Alexander the Great and his war expeditions. It is abundant with philosophical accounts, advice and instructions.

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

4.1 Is authenticity established?

*Panj Ganj* is a masterpiece of the Persian literature. The five manuscripts of the book comprise established dates of transcription. The style and artistic features of each manuscript well corresponds to its date of preparation; their authenticity is attested by experts authenticating manuscripts. The National Committee for the Memory of the World of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO has selected and nominated five of the authentic copies of the *Khamseh*.

4.2 Is world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established?

**World significance:** concerning this feature, *Khamseh* is a masterpiece of the Persian literature. The romantic sections of *Khamseh* are among well-known love stories in the Persian literature. The tales of *Khosrow and Shirin* and *Layli and Majnoon* are as well-known for the peoples of the Middle East, Central Asia and India as is *Romeo and Juliet* for European nations, whilst Nezami wrote *Khamseh* 400 years before Shakespeare in a most simple and fluent language. Most Iranian and non-Iranian experts have recognised Nezami as a gifted poet having a unique taste. Nezami's skill in preparing and organising the order and sequence of his five stories brought him many followers so that from the 7<sup>th</sup> century HD/ 13<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards more than a hundred famous poets have copied his work in part or as a whole. Any poet, who wrote a versified story after Nezami, used *Khamseh* as a model. His style is not only adopted by Iranian poets, but all through the Iranian literary world it is considered an exemplar. The most used tales of Nezami for adaptation are his *Khosrow and Shirin* and *Layli and Majnoon*. A number of Turkish poets have poems adapted from Nezami's style. The Indian subcontinent also boasts poems versified in the style of *khamseh* and Nezami's poems. Amir Khosrow Dehlavi, Fayzi Fayyazi and Fani Keshmiri are among the poets who have written in Nezami's style in India. Abdol Rahman Jami, Khajoye Kermani, Amir Alishir Navayi and other Iranian poets have adopted Nezami's style in their writings. In addition, many essay and description have been written on Nezami's *khamseh*.

*Panj Ganj* has been translated into German, English, Russian, Italian, French, Japanese, Turkish, Armenian and Urdu languages. Many researchers from different countries have studied Nezami's poetry.

Owing to its importance in Persian literature, *Khamseh* has been reprinted either in whole or in part in Iran and other countries over and over again. *Khamseh* is also printed and distributed in Moscow, Baku, Vienna, Prague, Leipzig, Oxford, New York, and Bombay.

**Uniqueness:** *Khamseh* is a masterpiece of Persian literature. The style adopted by Nezami for narrating his stories brought about a significant transformation in Iranian poetry and paved a novel way for subsequent poets, altogether leading to the birth of “School of Nezami”. The art of narration in the form of poetry in the Persian language reaches its peak in Nezami’s *Khamseh*, making his poems a masterpiece of world literature as a result of this endeavour. No other Persian-speaking poet after Nezami managed to versify a love story to the level of Nezami’s *Panj Ganj*.

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

- (a) **Time:** *Khamseh* is written at the time of the rule of the Saljuqids in Iran. As one of the biggest ruling dynasties in Iran after the advent of Islam, the Saljuqids were such advocates of poetry and literature, that many poets have created eternal works of literary value in this era. Even though the rulers were Turkish speakers, the standard language in the whole kingdom was the Persian language, thus justifying the language of Nezami’s poems, understandable for the people.
- (b) **Place:** *Khamseh* was written in the city known as Ganjeh. At that time Ganjeh was part of the territory of Iran and belonged to this country. In Ganjeh just as in other cities of Iran, the standard language was Persian. Versified some 850 years ago, Nezami’s poems were written in a language which is still easily understandable for the peoples of its region, Caucasia and all other Persian-speaking nations.
- (c) **People:** Nezami’s poems emanate from Persian stories thus were easily accepted by the masses. Today, almost all peoples of Caucasia through to India are familiar with the tales of *Khosrow and Shirin*, *Layli and Majnoon* and Alexander the Great. Influenced by Nezami’s poems, *Khosrow and Shirin* and *Layli and Majnoon* still symbolise love and devotion in these countries. Love stories are the most liked by the people. In the Persian literature, love stories mainly take the form of poetry-the form most preferred by the general public. Persian-speakers believe rhyme and poetry attach greater artistic value to stories, making them even more acceptable.
- (d) **Subject and theme:** *Panj Ganj* means five treasures. It takes this name because it is a collection of five sections versified in the form of Mathnavi (see above for description on Mathnavi). Each section/Mathnavi focuses on a particular subject all explained in details under item 3.2 above.
- (e) **Form and style:** the nominated collection includes five illustrated manuscripts, selected by the National Committee for the Memory of the World of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO. The selected manuscripts boast splendour in calligraphy and book-writing. Special properties of each manuscript is described as follows:

*Manuscript no.1:* belonging to the library of Sepahsalar (Mottahari) school; prepared in 412 folios as text and margin; text is situated within coloured rule; calligrapher is Morshid Katib Shirazi; dates back to 956 HD/ 1549 AD; consists of five coloured frontispieces and 30 miniatures; dimensions 32.5 × 20; registration number is 400; this manuscript was owned by E’tezad al-Dowleh, a Qajar prince, in 1284 HD/ 1867 AD; in 1297 HD/ 1880 AD this manuscript was endowed to the Naseri (Sepahsalar) school.

*Manuscript no.2:* belonging to the library of Golestan palace; prepared in 353 folios, inlaid; each page containing 21 lines; text is situated within rule; calligrapher is anonymous; prepared in 954 HD/ 1547 AD; contains five coloured frontispieces and 12 miniatures; the manuscript has a calf cover; dimensions 32 × 20; registration number is 1914; this manuscript had belonged to the library of the Qajar king, Nasaraddin shah (1264-1313 HD/ 1848- 1896 AD).

*Manuscript no.3:* belonging to the National Museum of Iran; prepared in Nasta'liq script in 974 pages; calligrapher is Sheik Mohammed Bin Fakhroddin Ahmed al-Katib al-Sultani al-Hiravi; was prepared on 22 Ramadan, 933 HD/ 22 June 1527 AD; contains five illuminated frontispieces and 22 miniatures; the manuscript has a gilt browned binding with flap; dimensions 30.3 × 19.5; registration number is 4363; in 1017 HD/1608 AD this manuscript was endowed to the shrine of Sheik Safi in Ardabil (Iran), by the Safavid King, Shah Abbass 1.

*Manuscript no.4:* belonging to Malek National Library and Museum in 505 folios; each page contains 31 lines; calligrapher's name is Mohammed Bin Motahhar Bin Yousef Bin Abi Saeed Ghazi Nishabouri; dates back to Sha'ban, 833 HD/ April 1430 AD; consists of five frontispieces coloured; the manuscript has a lacquered binding, significant of the Qajar period; dimensions are 35 × 24; registration number is 6031. This manuscript along with the *Shahnameh* (book of kings) was prepared in a single volume to be preserved at the library of Baysonghor Mirza. In 1296 HD/ 1879 AD it became one of the possession of Farhad Mirza Mo'tamed al-Dowleh, a Qajar prince.

*Manuscript no.5:* belonging to the Central Library and document centre of the University of Tehran; dimensions 32 × 20; Prepared in 179 folios, with each page having 25 lines; text is typed in a chart; calligrapher is anonymous; dated 718 HD/ 1318 AD ; consists of four coloured frontispieces and 17 miniatures; the manuscript has a calf binding with medallion . Registration number is 5179.

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

Rarity: there are many manuscripts of *Panj ganj* available, but the nominated collection possesses certain features, differentiating it from all others. The following are among the main differentiating features of the manuscripts nominated:

1. The manuscript belonging to the library of Sepahsalar (Mottahari) school is unique for its exquisite artistic features and number of miniatures
2. The manuscript belonging to the library of Golestan Palace is among the majestic copies of the *Khamseh* that is kept at the royal library since the rule of the Safavid dynasty.
3. The manuscript belonging to the National Museum of Iran is attributed to a most famous Iranian calligrapher. Up to this date, this manuscript has been showcased in three international exhibitions in London, Saint Petersburg and Rome.
4. The manuscript belonging to Malek National Library and Museum, prepared for Baysonghor Mirza, the Timurid prince has a special note on the prince's library written at the beginning.
5. The manuscript belonging to the central library and document centre of the University of Tehran dates back to 718 HD/ 1318 AD, making it the oldest known, dated manuscript of *Khamseh* available.

## 5 LEGAL INFORMATION

- 5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)  
Manuscripts numbers 1 and 4 have individual owners whose name and contact details are as follows:

*Manuscript no.1:*

Owner's name: Mohammad

Owner's surname: Imami Kashani  
Office Address:  
Sepahsalar Library (Shahid Mottahari), Sepahsalar School (Shahid Mottahari), Baharestan Sq.,  
Tehran-Iran.  
Tel (Office): +98-21 33 56 61 66  
Fax (Office): +98-21 33 12 44 72

*Manuscript no.4:*

Owner's name: Mojtaba  
Owner's surname: Hosseini  
Office Address:  
Malek National Library and Museum, Baghe Melli (National Garden), Imam Khomeini Street,  
Tehran-Iran.  
Tel: +98-21 66 72 60 72  
Fax: +98-21 66 70 59 74

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)  
Information on manuscripts numbers 2, 3 and 5 are as below:

*Manuscript no.2:*

Name of Organisation: Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation  
Name and Surname of Custodian: Dr Parvin Seqatolislami (Ms)  
Post: Curator, Golestan Palace  
Office Address: Golestan Palace, Opposite Arg Mosque, 15 Khordad Square, Tehran-Iran  
Tel (Office): +98-21 33 91 20 50  
Fax (Office): +98-21 33 11 18 11

*Manuscript no.3:*

Name of Organisation: Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation  
Name and Surname of Custodian: Azadeh Ardakani  
Post: Curator, National Museum of Iran  
Office Address: National Museum of Iran, on the corner of 30 Tir Street, Imam Khomeini Street,  
Imam Khomeini Square, Tehran-Iran.  
Tel (Office): +98-21 66 70 26 77  
Fax (office): +98-21 66 70 26 48

*Manuscript no.5:*

Name of Organisation: Central Library and document centre of the University of Tehran  
Name and Surname of Custodian: Dr Fatemeh Fahimnia (Ms)  
Post: Head, Central Library and document centre of the University of Tehran.  
Office Address (Office): Central Library and document centre, University of Tehran, Tehran-Iran  
Tel (Office): +98-21 66 46 61 99  
Fax (Office): +98-21 66 49 53 88

5.3 Legal status:

- (a) Category of ownership
  - Manuscript no.1: personal
  - Manuscript no.2: national
  - Manuscript no.3: National
  - Manuscript no.4: personal
  - Manuscript no.5: national

(b) Accessibility

Accessibility to the manuscripts depends on the rules governing the libraries in which they are preserved.

(c) Copyright status

Manuscripts' copyrights belong to the libraries in which they are preserved.

Responsible administration

Manuscript no.1: Sepahsalar Library (Shahid Mottahri)

Manuscript no.2: Golestan Palace

Manuscript no.3: National Museum of Iran

Manuscript no.4: Malek National Library and Museum

Manuscript no.5: Central Library and document centre of the University of Tehran

(d) Other factors

## **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.

All manuscripts have a colour scan made of them, accessible in case of need.

## **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**

(a) *the owner of the heritage*:-----

(b) *the custodian*:-----

(c) *Your national or regional Memory of the World committee*: Over 30 meetings were held with the presence of evaluation experts and professors for a close assessment of the manuscripts of concern. The venues of these meetings were Sepahsalar (Mottahari) and Golestan Palace libraries, Iran National Museum, Malek National Library and Museum, Astan-e Quds Razavi library as well as the Central Library and document centre of the University of Tehran. Available directories of existing manuscripts were closely studied. The National Committee of the Memory of the World of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with the Committee's group of evaluators then selected and confirmed nomination of the five manuscripts of concern.

## **PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION**

### **8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

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

All manuscripts are preserved under standard conditions; temperature and humidity of all reservoirs are under control.

### **9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

#### **9.1 Detail the preservation context of the documentary heritage (see 3.3)**

Preservation context for each of the five nominated manuscripts is explained in details as follows:

*Manuscript no.1:*

Sepahsalar (Mottahari) library was built in 1297 HD/ 1880 AD by the orders of Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar, the then grand vizier of Iran. The library's premises also include a school and a mosque. Its manuscript of the *Khamseh* is preserved under standard conditions in the treasury especially designed for the preservation of manuscripts.

*Manuscript no. 2:*

Golestan Palace Library, the royal library of Iran, was built by the orders of Fathali Shah of the Qajar dynasty in early 13<sup>th</sup> century HD/ 19<sup>th</sup> century. From its establishment until the dawn of the Qajar dynasty much priceless manuscript was collected for preservation in the royal library. Today, the Golestan palace is one of the most famous museums in Iran and its collection of books are accessible for researchers. Its manuscript is preserved under standard conditions.

*Manuscript no.3:*

Iran National Museum, the biggest museum in Iran, is not only home to historical items, but also a treasury for a collection of manuscripts and documents. The Museum was established in 1316 HD/ 1937 AD . Its manuscript of the *Khamseh* is preserved under standard conditions in the treasury especially designed for the preservation of manuscripts.

*Manuscript no.4:*

Haj Hossein Agha Malek was a renowned Iranian merchant. He owned an extremely large library and vast lands, which he endowed to Astan-e Quds Razavi in 1316 HD/ 1937 AD. Today, Malek National Library and Museum is an important cultural-scientific centre. This library possesses a newly built building in which manuscripts are preserved under standard conditions.

*Manuscript no.5:*

Central Library and document centre of the University of Tehran is the oldest academic library in Iran with a life span of 60 years. It boasts a vast collection of manuscripts, lithography, microfilms, documents and historical photographs. The library's new premise was built in 1971 a standard and earthquake resistant library in Iran. The manuscript of concern is preserved under standard conditions in a section especially designed for the preservation of valuable scripts inside the treasury of manuscripts.