

**Nomination form
International Memory of the World Register***

**Kitāb Shifā al-Asqām al-Āriḍat min al-Ẓahir wa
al-Bāṭin min al-Ajsām**

The Book of Healing for Internal and External
Diseases of the Body

ID Code [2016-81]

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

This manuscript, written by a native of Timbuktu called Sayyid Ahmad al-Raqqād (or al-Raqqādi) al-kunti (1096/1684), talks about the various temperaments, the virtues of animals, birds, and medicinal plants, and the treatment of wounds and surgery. The subject matter dealt with in this book goes far beyond the purely medical domain to encompass the magical, and beyond the treatment of souls and bodies to fulfil the expectations of humanity in their lives down here on earth and to bestow upon them a kind of harmony with their environment. As such, the writer tackles matters such as exorcism, the rejection of the harmful influence of envy, re-establishing good relations between husband and wife, the removal of evil spirits, divinatory practices for encouraging a good harvest, the fight against infertility, and finding lost items.

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

The NGO specialized in manuscripts preservation and valorization for the defense of Islamic Culture (*Sauvegarde et Valorisation des Manuscrits pour la Défense de la Culture*) (SAVAMA-DCI) Bacco-Dijcoroni, Rue 701, porte c/135, Près du Lycée Massa Makan Diabaté, Bamako, Mali. (00223) 76 36 96 60 / (00223) 65 95 01 89 / contact@savamadci.net

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

The NGO SAVAMA-DCI is an organization providing technical support to holders of manuscripts. It includes a number of holders and private collectors to whom it provides the technical and financial support necessary for them to preserve their manuscript collections. The Mamma HAÏDARA Library is one of the libraries in the SAVAMA-DCI network and holds this item (manuscript), considered to be documentary heritage.

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

- Dr Abdel Kader Haïdara, Manuscript Prospector, Director General of the Mamma HAÏDARA

* We used the critical edition of the manuscripts by Dr Floréal Sanagustin to complete this form, and have taken some extracts from it. The edition is available online in three volumes at the following link:

<http://vecmas-tombouctou.ens-lyon.fr/spip.php?rubrique2> [in French only]

Library and President of the NGO specialized in manuscripts preservation and valorization for the defense of Islamic Culture (*Sauvegarde et Valorisation des Manuscrits pour la Défense de la Culture*) (SAVAMA-DCI)

- Dr Banzoumana TRAORE, Manager of written heritage and coordinator of the NGO specialized in manuscripts preservation and valorization for the defense of Islamic Culture (*Sauvegarde et Valorisation des Manuscrits pour la Défense de la Culture*) (SAVAMA-DCI)

2.4 Contact details

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3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

If inscribed, the exact title and institution(s) to appear on the certificate should be given

The work being nominated is called: Kitāb Shifā al-Asqām al-Āriḍat min al-Ẓahir wa al-Bāṭin min al-Ajsām or “The Book of Healing for Internal and External Diseases of the Body” (*“Livre de la guérison des maladies internes et externes affectant le corps”*) It belongs to a collection of forty-two thousand manuscripts held at the Mamma HAÏDARA Library in Timbuktu.

3.4 History/provenance

Describe what you know of the history of the collection or document. Your knowledge may not be complete, but give the best description you can.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Name	Address
Dr Abdel Kader HAÏDARA	

Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+223 76 36 96 60		haidara_manuscrits@yahoo.fr

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name	Address	
Bibliothèque Mamma HAÏDARA de Tombouctou (Mamma HAÏDARA Library in Timbuktu)		
Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+223 76 36 96 60		haidara_manuscrits@yahoo.fr

4.3 Legal status

This manuscript belongs to the Mamma HAÏDARA Library's collection of manuscripts created under authorization from the Ministry of Culture of Mali.

4.4 Accessibility

The Mamma HAÏDARA Library is a scientific and cultural establishment. It is open to the public and is fully accessible. The digital copy of this manuscript is accessible online via the following link:
<http://www.alukah.net/library/11564/78958/>

4.5 Copyright status

Not applicable

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

Given that the autograph of **Shifa al-Asqam** has not been found, perhaps due to the nomadic nature of the author (moving from one village to another) and the large number of disciples he had, we are using the opinions of experts and users of the original document to place the time of the document being proposed for registration as the seventeenth century (see bibliography).

5.2 World significance

The distinctive feature of this manuscript, besides its considerable length (504 pages), is that it combines medicine and magic, scientific tradition and popular tradition. Therein lies its interest as it gives an idea of the state of medical knowledge in the islamized Sub-Saharan regions at a late time, the seventeenth century. It is clear that the foundations of Arab-Muslim science reached these regions as soon as they became islamized. Religious sciences were taught there along with rational sciences in knowledge-sharing centres such as Timbuktu, a town where there remains, to this day, tens of thousands of Arabic manuscripts that testify to this activity.

It is also noteworthy that the work sometimes mentions the local name of the plant or animal in one of the African languages of the region of Timbuktu or even in Berber. This represents a source of information for linguists at a time when manuscripts written in African languages are being studied on

an unprecedented scale.

This magico-medical manuscript was written by Shaykh Ahmad al-Raqqâdî al-Kuntî for a local audience, and as well as being heavily imbued with Muslim sacredness was sensitive to local traditions and open to influences from the East and elsewhere.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

Does the heritage meet any of the following tests? (It must meet at least one of them.)

1 Time

This manuscript, which is three and a half centuries old, makes reference to medieval Greco-Arabic medical traditions. It also gives an idea of the state of medical knowledge in the islamized Sub-Saharan regions at the late time of the seventeenth century.

2 Place

In his treatment of the subject matter in this work, the author makes reference to his immediate environment, Timbuktu, and beyond, towards the south of Algiers, when he gives the names of animals in Berber and plants found in Morocco.

3 People

In the work, the author quotes Muslim shaykhs such as al-Shâfi'î, one of the four great imams of ritual schools, and companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He alludes to people, without naming them, such as when he writes "The doctor of al-Ma'mûn, one of the Abbasid Caliphs, said" (page 364), and again when he writes, perhaps in reference to Avicenne who was nicknamed al-Shaykh al-ra'îs, "Qâla shaykh al-aṭibbâ" (page 374). However, the author does readily name Hippocrates and Galen (pages 362 and 364).

4 Subject and theme

This manuscript is a study of medicine. It talks about the various temperaments, the theory of humours, hygiene, the virtues of the surahs in the Holy Quran, animals, birds, medicinal plants, mining products, sexual relationships, caring for wounds and surgery.

5 Form and style

This copy of the work is characterised by its Sahrâwi (Sahara) writing, from a geographical area that spans from the north of Mali to the south of Algeria, Mauritania and the south of Morocco. It is written in a mix of coloured ink – black, red, and yellow – and presented in a volume of 254 folios making 508 pages. A page has on average 28 lines. The size of the written part is 12.6 x 18.9 cm and the size of the cover is 17.8 x 22.8 cm. On some pages, there are annotations or additions in the margin, undoubtedly added by followers or copyists. The text is written as one piece and does not therefore feature the standard divisions of chapters or sections. However, the red ink shows where paragraphs begin and sometimes the prophetic hadiths related.

6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

Our author, Sidi Ahmad al-Khalifa al-Raqqadi, was a great scholar and a great Sufi sheikh thought of as a 'qutb' (pole), but he also took an interest in commercial transactions as he was also a successful entrepreneur. He played a central role in developing the religious prestige of the Kunta family in Qadiriyya around Arawan and he led a zawiya in Arawan, where he had many followers. This is his only known work. He undoubtedly wrote this work as a response to a social and spiritual need tackling questions related to humanity and their environment, body, thoughts, soul, and relationships with their peers.

This empirical medicine is still popular with patients today throughout the Arab and, more generally, the Muslim world. Herbalists, but also traditional doctors, still practise this tradition which is growing in popularity along with a renewed interest in alternative and herbal medicine.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

There is one original copy of the manuscript in the Mamma HAÏDARA Library, but there are three copies at the Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Learning and Islamic Research, as mentioned in the cataloguing and reference section.

6.2 Integrity

The copy is in excellent condition and is perfectly legible.
