

Hundred and thirtieth Session

130 EX/33

PARIS, 11 October 1988

Original: French

Item 9.5 of the provisional agenda

CELEBRATION OF THE THOUSAND-YEAR EXISTENCE OF THE SHĀH-NĀMEH  
(BOOK OF KINGS), COMPOSED BY FERDOWSĪ, THE IRANIAN EPIC POET

SUMMARY

This item has been placed on the provisional agenda for the 130th session in accordance with a proposal submitted by the Permanent Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran in a letter to the Chairman of the Executive Board dated 6 October 1988. The explanatory note accompanying that letter is reproduced overleaf.

25 OCT. 1988

Permanent Delegation of the Islamic Republic  
of Iran to Unesco

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Shāh-nāmeḥ (Book of Kings), written by Ferdowsī 1,000 years ago, is one of the most outstanding works of Persian literature. The author took some 30 years to write it, and the monumental work was completed around 989 or 990, by the Christian calendar.

This work of 60,000 verse couplets containing legendary and historical episodes and describing the splendour of ancient Persia truly ushers in the age of the Persian epic.

In composing his work the author drew not only on the epic traditions of ancient Iran but also on the socio-cultural environment of Islamic Iran. In the descriptions to be found in the war and love scenes his talent is without parallel.

The Shāh-nāmeḥ is a rigorous work and marks the start of the high period of Persian literature. The simplicity of its style, its unforced precision and the aptness of its vocabulary made of the poem a model that was often imitated in later literature. On the moral plane, too, the work was a model for popular justice and wisdom.

Ferdowsī's work has had a remarkable influence on world literature, and foreign authors and editors have translated it into various languages. A French translation, for instance, was completed in 1878, and an English translation more recently, in 1967.