

## PREFACE

*Libelli sua fata habent.* This much used phrase seems particularly appropriate for this book. There is, indeed, a history, a lengthy gestation period spanning three decades. The International Rasûlid Hexaglot Project began in the late 1960's. At that time, the late Tibor Halasi-Kun, Professor of Turkic Studies at Columbia University, was gathering material in Beirut for his study of the OttomanTurkish elements in the Syrian Arab dialects.<sup>1</sup> During his stay in Beirut, the Lebanese scholar, Maḥmûd al-Ġûl, gave him a set of photographs of a most unusual polyglot manuscript in Arabic script from Yemen with the request that he publish it. This six-language *vocabularium*, which is part of a larger codex, we have come to term the *Rasûlid Hexaglot*. The codex remains in private possession in Yemen.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Halasi-Kun was an excellent choice for this project. He had a long history of interest in medieval Turkic glossaries. In the late 1930's, he had begun work on the manuscript of a Mamlûk Qıpçaq glossary and language treatise, the *At-Tuḥfat az-Zakiyya fi'l-Luġat at-Turkiyya*, the facsimile of which he published in 1942.<sup>3</sup> In the course of his researches in the Istanbul libraries he also uncovered an important dictionary of Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkic and Mongol, the *Šamil ül-Luġa*, which he presented to Louis Ligeti who published the Mongol material in 1962.<sup>4</sup>

In 1974, Professor Halasi-Kun brought together an international team of scholars to work collaboratively on the *Hexaglot* with the following division of labor: : Halasi-Kun was responsible for the Turkic material, P.B. Golden (Professor of Central Asian and Middle Eastern History at Rutgers University)

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<sup>1</sup> T. Halasi-Kun, "The Ottoman Elements in the Syrian Dialects, I" *Archivum Ottomanicum*, I (1969), 14-91, *IIAO*, V (1973), 17-95, II continued, *AO*, VII (1982), 117-267.

<sup>2</sup> This is typical of a great many manuscript sources in Yemen, see G. R. Smith, "Yemenite History - Problems and Misconceptions" *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, 20 (1990), p. 132, reprinted in his *Studies in the Medieval History of the Yemen and South Arabia* (London, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> T. Halasi-Kun, "Die mameluk-kiptschakischen Sprachstudien und die Handschriften in Stambul" *Kőrösi-Csoma Archivum*, III (1940), 77-83 and his *La langue des Kiptchaks d'après un manuscrit arabe d'Istanboul* (Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica, IV, Budapest, 1942). This was the beginning of a series of studies on Middle Qıpçaq philology the last of which was his "Kipchak Turkic Philology X: The *at-Tuḥfat* and its Author" *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, V (1985 [1987]), 167-178. See there also for a full listing of his studies on this theme. His critical edition of the *at-Tuḥfat* is forthcoming.

<sup>4</sup> L. Ligeti, "Un vocabulaire mongol d'Istanboul" *Acta Orientalia Hungarica*, XIV/1 (1962), 3-99.

for the Greek material, Lajos (Louis) Ligeti (Vice-President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, for many years Chair of the Department of Inner Asian Studies at Budapest University) for the Mongol material and Ödön (Edmund) Schütz (Research Professor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) for the Armenian entries. Halasi-Kun and Golden were to work jointly on the Arabic and Persian entries. Golden assisted on the Turkic materials and Professor Ligeti made a number of important suggestions regarding the Persian readings. A grant from the American Council of Learned Societies was crucial to moving the project along, making possible a number of joint meetings of the Hungarian and American groups in the course of the 1970's. During that same period, Halasi-Kun and Golden met weekly to compare results, review and discuss the materials. In the early 1980's, the press learned of the "King's Dictionary" and a number of stories appeared in the *New York Times* and other newspapers in the United States and abroad as well as in the *Aramco World Magazine*.<sup>5</sup>

It was the original intention of the *Hexaglot* team to publish the complete transcription/translation of the text together with separate monographs on the Turkic, Mongol, Greek and Armenian vocabularies. Of these only the monograph by Golden on the Greek material has been published.<sup>6</sup> By the early 1980's, the basic outlines of the text had been in place, but during the rest of that decade work stalled due to the press of other projects and the untimely demise of Professor Ligeti in 1987. This was followed by the death of Professor Halasi-Kun who, after a series of illnesses, succumbed in 1991.

Unbeknownst to the American-Hungarian team at that time, the codex which contains our text had also been photographed in 1978 by Professor Daniel Varisco (Hofstra University), an American anthropologist who is now one of the leading figures in Rasûlid studies, and brought to the attention of the late Professor R.B. Serjeant (who died in 1993), the British *doyen* of specialists in the history and culture of medieval Yemen. They were interested in publishing the facsimile of the entire codex. This was done in 1998 under the editorship of Varisco and Professor G. Rex Smith.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See John Noble Wilford, "Ancient Dictionary Opens Window on Islamic Past" *The New York Times*, February 5, 1981, C, 1, 3; Barry Hoberman, "The King's Dictionary" *Aramco World Magazine* (March-April, 1982), 26-29.

<sup>6</sup> P.B. Golden, "The Byzantine Greek Elements in the Rasûlid Hexaglot" *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, V (1985 [1987]), 41-166.

<sup>7</sup> D.M. Varisco, G.R. Smith (eds.), *The Manuscript of al-Malik al-Afḍal al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī Dāʿūd b. Yūsuf b. ʿUmar b. ʿAlī Ibn Rasūl. A Medieval Arabic Anthology from the Yemen* (Gibb Memorial Trust Fund, Warminster, 1998).

In 1992, the American-Hungarian *Hexaglot* team learned of Professor Varisco's interest in the Rasûlid codex and Varisco and Golden met to discuss the text. Varisco was most encouraging, brought Golden into contact with the American Institute for Yemeni Studies and helped to supply the necessary computer software with which the final phase of the project was completed.

Work on the *Hexaglot* was now continued by Golden, who assumed editorial responsibility (as well as the task of completing the Turkic entries) and Schütz who continued work on the Armenian section. There were, again, many interruptions for other projects and commitments. An important contribution to moving the work forward was made by a grant from the American Institute for Yemeni Studies which facilitated the transfer of the text of the *Hexaglot* into computer format for the first time in 1992.

Several years later, the editor invited Prof. Thomas T. Allsen (The College of New Jersey), a distinguished scholar of the institutional and cultural history of Činggisid Eurasia, to contribute an essay to this volume that would help to set this extraordinary text in its proper cultural context. This rounded out the work on this volume.

Even in the final stages, there was an unexpected loss. In November, 1999, as the camera-ready copy was being prepared, Edmond Schütz died, unable to complete the final revision of the Armenian material. Of the remaining monographic studies of the languages of the *Hexaglot*, there is a draft in French of the Mongol material by Ligeti which is being prepared for publication. Halasi-Kun did not have time to undertake the monograph on the Turkic material and this is now being done by Golden.

Nonetheless, after twenty-five years of frequently interrupted labor, the key phase of this project has reached fruition with the appearance of this volume. Numerous debts have been incurred along the way. In particular, we must mention Prof. W. Schmucker with whom Prof. Halasi-Kun consulted early on in the project with regard to some of the Arabic and Persian readings. Contributions in this area were also made by Prof. A. P. Martinez. At the invitation of the editor, Prof. György Kara very kindly gave of his time to review Ligeti's Mongolian material, readings suggested by him have been so indicated in the text. Profs. Marcel Erdal, Robert Dankoff and Daniel Varisco generously shared their broad learning in their areas of expertise. Varisco, in particular, reviewed the Arabic and made many useful suggestions based on his broad knowledge of Yemen and Medieval Yemeni Arabic. These are noted in the commentary. On the technical side, the transfer of this text to the computer and the preparation of this manuscript and the camera-ready copy would have been impossible without the help of my son, Gregory K. Golden,

who grew up hearing tales of the *Hexaglot*. Lucille Allsen, who also heard more of the *Hexaglot* than she may have cared to, prepared the camera-ready copy of Prof. Allsen's chapter. Jeffrey Moy, a graduate student at Rutgers University, assisted in the preparation of the indices. Patricia Radder of Brill Publishers has been of great help and a source of encouragement.

Special mention must also be made of Mrs. Eve Halasi-Kun, Prof. Halasi-Kun's helpmate in all things and of the late Mrs. Nelli Schütz whose warmth and hospitality made our Budapest meetings truly memorable events. My wife, Sylvia Wu Golden, was, as always, a model of patience and support.

Needless to say, the editor is responsible for all the shortcomings of this work.

Peter B. Golden  
West Windsor, New Jersey  
March, 2000