



RASULID HEXAGLOT

RASULID HEXAGLOT, a six-language glossary compiled by or prepared for the sixth Rasulid king of Yemen, al-Malek al-Afzal al-'Abbās b. 'Ali b. Dā'ud b. Yusof b. 'Omar b. 'Ali Derḡam-al-Din (r. 1363-77). It is a collection of vocabularies, listing forms in Arabic with matching entries in Persian, Turkic (*Turki*, in three dialects), a dialect of colloquial Byzantine Greek, a dialect of Western Armenian (in all likelihood Cilician), and a dialect of Mongol (most probably reflecting the Mongol spoken in the Il-khanid state). All entries are transcribed in Arabic script.

The *Hexaglot* (thus named by its modern editors) is part of a large codex (542 pages) from the library of al-Malek al-Afzal al-'Abbās. The manuscript, with few exceptions, was written by one copyist/scribe in *nask*, often lacking the diacritical dots (*noqaṭ*). Some of the marginal notes were penned by al-Malek al-Afzal himself in 1376 (Varisco and Smith, p. 6). A facsimile of the complete codex, currently held in a private collection in Yemen, was published in 1998 (Varisco and Smith), with page numbers added by the editors. A study of the *Hexaglot's* Byzantine Greek elements (Golden, 1985) and the full edition/transcription/translation (Golden, 2000) appeared in 1985 and 2000, respectively.

The *Hexaglot* consists of two distinct parts (Varisco and Smith, pp. 186-206, 211). The first (pp. 186-97) has entries in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Greek and Armenian arranged in two six-columned entries per page, usually 29 lines in length (termed 'sections A and B' by the translators, cf. Golden, 2000, p. 51), and a third two-columned listing (termed 'section C'), consisting of Arabic-



Mongol, Arabic-Turkic and Arabic-Persian entries (for the page layout of the manuscript, facsimiles of these pages are also included in Golden, 2000). The second glossary (Varisco and Smith, pp. 198-205) contains three sets of entries (divided by the translators into sections A, B, and C) in four columns with 29-31 lines per page, in Arabic, Persian, Turkic and Mongol. One page is written in a smaller hand, contains 45 lines, and four sets of entries (p. 205). There are additional marginal entries (pp. 205-6), and an Arabic-Persian-Turkic “Supplement,” p. 211).

The Rasulid kings had a tradition of scholarship. One of al-Malek al-Afzal al-‘Abbās’ predecessors, al-Malek al-Ašraf ‘Omar II (r. 1295-96), before he came to power, was the author of an agricultural almanac (dated 1271, cf. Varisco, pp. 18-19). Agriculture was also among the intellectual interests of al-Malek al-Afzal al-‘Abbās whose writings spanned a wide range of literary, philological, historical, genealogical and ethnographic topics. The codex has been termed “a veritable treasure trove” (Varisco and Smith, p. 5) because of the variety of topics represented in it. These include, in addition to agriculture and lexicography (for an Arabic-Ethiopian glossary, see Varisco and Smith, pp. 217-19), works pertaining to astronomy and astrology, calendars, *feqh*, geography, mathematics, genealogy, proverbs, religious topics, routes and distances (shipping and travel), taxation, tribal law, warfare and weapons (pp. 9-23).

Although a suitable Arab genealogy was created for them, the Sunni Rasulid house (1228-1454) appears to have stemmed from an Oğuz (see [ĠOZZ](#)) Turkic clan, the Menjik (Menčik), a personal name also found among the Mamluks (Rásonyi and Baski, II, pp. 538-39). The dynasty’s progenitor, Moḥammad b. Hārūn, a servitor of the mid-12th century ‘Abbasid caliphs, acquired the sobriquet ‘messenger’ (*rasul*) because of the sensitive tasks entrusted to him. Later, the Rasulids entered Ayyubid service and were part of the entourage of either Turānšāh b. Ayyub (r. 1174-81) when he took control of Yemen in 1173, or of Turānšāh’s brother and successor, Tuġtigin (r. 1181-97), who came to Yemen in 1183. Subsequently, the Rasulids governed Yemen for their Ayyubid overlords, becoming de facto independent rulers in 1228. Their power was concentrated in the Tehāma and south of the country. They were often contesting control over Ṣan‘ā’ with the Shi‘ite Zaydi Imams of the north. Their capital was at Ta‘izz (Varisco and Smith, pp. 6-7; Smith, pp. 455-56).

The *Hexaglot*, although compiled in Yemen, which was never under Chingisid rule (see [ĈENGIZ KHAN](#)), was, in many respects, a product of the Eurasian

world shaped by the Mongol conquests. The latter brought East and West Asia into closer contact and encouraged the study of languages. A number of polyglot dictionaries or glossaries, some of a practical commercial or missionary nature (cf. the two glossaries in the *Codex Cumanicus*) appear across Eurasia, from China and Korea to the Crimea, Egypt and Yemen, in the Chingisid realms and in the lands that were connected to them by politics and trade (Allsen). These grammars and glossaries continued to be written well after the fall of the Chingisid Empire in the 14th century.

In the *Hexaglot*, as in many other works, the lexical material is organized according to subject matter, themes, or semantic categories rather than orthographic or grammatical principles. The most extensive transcriptions are provided for Medieval Greek and Armenian words. The latter presented the most complex problems of transcription as aspirated Armenian *c'*, *p'*, *t'*, *k'* could not be represented. Armenian *s*, *ts*, and *dz* were noted as *s*. Armenian *dz* was sometimes rendered by *ž* (e.g., Varisco and Smith, p. 186 line 1: “God” *asfaž* = *asvadz* [*asdvadz*]; cf. Golden, 2000, pp. 20-21, 55, 61). The Persian entries largely follow the established orthographic conventions. There are a few terms (e.g., Varisco and Smith, p. 193, line 23/Golden, 2000, p. 150: *pātingā* “eggplant”) that differ from standard Persian.

The first glossary begins with religion and associated terms dealing with Heaven and Hell, this world and the hereafter. In a series of verbs in the imperative, contrasting pairs often follow each other: e.g.: Arab. *e'lam* “know!” – Pers. *bedān* – Turk. *bilgil* – Greek *iksevre* – Arm. *qdesir* (*kdetsir*); Arab. *ensa* “forget!” – Pers. *farāmuš kon* – Turk. *unut* – Greek *lizmonise* – Arm. *marsir* (*martsir*) (p. 187A, lines 3-4). A partial conjugation of the verb “to do” (e.g., Varisco and Smith, p. 188A, line 1-B line 8) includes negative forms: Arab. *mā fa'ala* “he did not do” – Pers. *nakard* – Turk. *qılmadı* – Greek *uk epike* – Arm. *čarar* (p. 188A, line 5). Verbal forms are followed by a listing of personal pronouns (e.g., p. 188B, line 9) in nominative—Arab. *anā* “I” – Pers. *man* – Turk. *ben* – Greek *eğō* – Arm. *es*—and dative/accusative forms—Arab. *lī* “to me” – Pers. *marā* – Turk. *bangā* – Greek *emenan* (acc.) – Arm. *inc*. Demonstrative and interrogative pronouns and prepositional forms are followed by words for body parts, human beings, and kinship. Some political terms (e.g., p. 191A, line 12) are included: Arabic *al-amir* – Pers. *amir* – Turk. *beg* – Greek *primikir* – Arm. *amira*. Adjectives (e.g., p. 191A, lines 18-19) are often given in contrasting pairs: Arabic *al-ṭawil* “long” – Pers. *derāz* – Turk. *uzun* – Greek *makrin* – Arm. *ergayn*; Arab. *al-qaşiri* “short” – Pers. *kutāh* – Turk. *qisğa* – Greek *kondon* –



Arm. *garj*. Days of the week and concepts relating to time are followed by terms for seasons, climate and natural phenomena. Dwellings and their contents (utensils) are grouped with plants, food and drink, garments and textiles, jewelry and precious and non-precious metals. Beasts of burden and other animals, insects, and horses are followed by weapons, horse paraphernalia, colors, diseases, falconry and birds, and numerals. Horses are often denoted by color, such as Arab. *al-ašqar* “chestnut horse” – Pers. *bur* “bay horse” – Turk. *čilgü* “chestnut, sorrel horse” Greek *dağalin* “roan horse” Arm. *garmir si (tsi)* “red horse” (p. 196A, line 3). The C column of the first glossary covers a wide variety of themes, including some unusual words for foods (e.g., p. 190C, line 15: Arab. *lākeša naw’ men al-ṭabīk* – Turk. *tutmaç*) and eating utensils (e.g., p. 190C, line 13: Arab. *odāni yokalo behemā al-rešta* “two pieces of wood with which one eats macaroni” [that is: chopsticks] – Turk. *šökü*; cf. Golden, 1994-95).

The second glossary, which lacks a section on verbs, covers similar themes, but often in greater detail, and lists, for example, 35 terms for clothing (Varisco and Smith, p. 205). Sometimes a dialect form or term is different from the first glossary. Examples are Arab. *al-lebā’* “colostrum,” which is first matched with Pers. *forša* – Turk. *ağuz* – Greek *pitiya* – Arm. *čapas* (p. 194A line 23) and then with Pers. *fala* Turk. *ağus* – Mong. *urāq* (p. 205B line 8); Arab. *al-dokn* “pearl millet” is first Pers. *gāvars* – Turk. *ṭarıq* – Greek *kekros* Arm. *goyrik* (p. 194A line 5) and then Pers. *arzan* – Turk. *taru* – Mong. *amun* (p. 202B line 18); Arab. *al-amir* “prince” is first Pers. *amir* – Turk. *beg* – Greek *primikir* – Arm. *amira* (p. 191A line 12) and then Pers. *mir* – Turk. *beg* – Mong. *noyin* (p. 198A lines 27-28).

The Turkic, Greek, Armenian and Mongol materials of the *Hexaglot* reflect living dialects rather than official literary languages. Local Yemeni chronicles (e.g., Ẓazraji, II, pp. 133-34, 294) record contacts with Turkish-controlled Anatolia (*Rum*) and the presence of Turkish, Greek and Armenian servitors and slaves in Yemen. These contacts are the most probable source of the Greek and Armenian entries. The Turkic material contains both Qepčāq and Oğuz elements: *til* “tongue, language” (Varisco and Smith, p. 198B, line 29), *til bilgen* “translator” (p. 198B, line 4), *tilawuz* “eloquent” (p. 203B, line 16), *dil* “tongue, language” (p. 189B, line 16), *dillik* “eloquent” (p. 191B, line 22), *yapağu, yapağı, jabağı* “wool” (p. 205C, line 1), as well as “felt” *kiz, kiyiz* (p. 202A, line 12) and *keče* (p. 193B, line 24). There are several entries in what is most probably a dialect of K^wārazmian Turkic as opposed to Oğuz and Qepčaq: e.g., “foot” *adaq* (p. 199A, line 14) v. *ayaq* (p.190A, line 25). The Mongol entries show Oğuz and



Eastern Turkic influences, typical of the Il-khanids: e.g., “elephant” *yaġan* (p. 199C, line 5) rather than Mong. *jaġan*; and “calf of the leg” *baldir* (p. 186C, line 14) rather than Mong. *köl ün bulcin*. There are Turkic loanwords in the Greek entries pointing to their Anatolian origins: e.g., *daġarčuki* [*daġartzuki*] “small leather sack” (p. 196B, line 13) < Oġuz Turk. *daġarčuq*, but *taġarčiq/taġarčuq* (p. 196B, line 13) in the *Hexaglot*; and “billy goat” *takas* (p. 195B, line 6) < Turk. *teke*, but *deke* (p. 195B, line 6) in the *Hexaglot*.

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