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A ROBUST AND VERSATILE SOLUTION FOR THE DIGITAL PUBLICATION OF MANUSCRIPT MATERIALS

I. Introduction

The rich text tradition of Rabghūzī's "Stories of the Prophets" is of great importance to turkology and islamology. Besides comprising very old and unique language monuments, the corpus represents also a unique cross-section of the development of the Chaghatay language and religious culture from the 14th century up to the end of the 19th century. The London MS of Rabghūzī's "Stories" was published in transcription with a translation, glossary, and indices in 1995 [1]. The RMC (The Rabghūzī Manuscript Corpus) project is the natural complement to this edition by taking into account all other existing major MSS. Effi-

ciency reasons force us, however, to publish the materials in a digitalized photographic way on CD-ROMs and not in the form of a critical edition like the London MS.

This corpus will greatly enhance the study of the linguistic developments of the 14th century pre-Chaghatay dialects all through the Classic Chaghatay period up to the modern languages of Central Asia at the beginning of the 20th century.

It is of no less importance that the corpus will present a rich source for the study of the development of Islam in Central Asia from the 14th up to the 20th century.

II. Criteria

As the solution should be open to future developments (at present information technology is changing very fast) and should operate not only locally but also in wide areas, it is important to draw up first a list of criteria to be met:

1. Robustness (usage, media-conservation, distribution)
2. Openness (technology, contents, organisation)
3. Scalability
4. Standardisation
5. Versatility (usage, security)

1. Robustness

The media used should be simple and cheap to conserve; the production of the CDs must be simple, without need of extra programming or engineering.

2. Openness

a) Concerning Technology: solutions must be platform independent (*i. e.* run without problems on DOS-Windows, Macintosh and Unix systems); solutions must be easy to adapt to future technological developments.

b) Concerning Contents: solutions must support both addition of new data and adaptation to new standards.

3. Scalability

Solutions must support the growing process of turning a small project into a larger one.

4. Standardisation

This issue concerns the central problem of creating information systems. Information cannot be easily retrieved or shared if it is not represented when using a set of common standards.

There exist industrial standard compression formats (GIF, JPEG) which are being used now. The software solution must accept such standards.

5. Versatility

Various access strategies must be possible when using the *same* software; use of the software should be easy, without need of a printed manual, as well as of difficult codes. It must be possible to secure the information by means of passwords in order to discourage illegal copying [2].