

Peter B. Golden  
Honorary Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2019)

### **Laudation**

Peter B. Golden is one of the greatest living representatives of international research into Central Eurasian history, especially the pre-Mongol period. Apparently, his oeuvre has already left an indelible mark on the field of his studies.

Peter B. Golden pursues the branch of Oriental Studies that has traditionally been one of the oldest and strongest branches of Hungarian oriental research, i.e. the Turks and the Mongols. It is no coincidence that his initiator on this path was Professor Tibor Halasi Kun, a professor at Columbia University, an honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, whose most talented student was Peter Golden. Studying Central Asian philology requires knowledge of countless languages, and with the exception of a few brilliant and many-sided scholars such as Joseph Marquart, Wilhelm Barthold and Paul Pelliot, no researcher could master the plethora of languages in which the history of Central Eurasia can fully be explored. Most scholars approach the Central Asian themes either from the angle of Near and Middle Eastern, mainly Islamic sources (Arabic, Persian, etc.) or from the vantage point of Far Eastern (mainly Chinese) sources. Peter Golden, in addition to the major world languages, knows almost all the languages needed to research the Central Eurasian field. In addition to the most important Arabic, Persian and Turkic sources, he also has direct access to Greek, Latin, Slavic and Georgian sources. His Hungarian knowledge is proved by the fact that he translated Károly Czeglédy's monograph on early Eurasian history into English. But all this immense knowledge of languages is only a basis for approaching almost every philological and historical issue of pre-Mongolian Central Asia with incredible erudition. His oeuvre is impressive not only in quantity but also in quality.

His areas of interest included: Turkic nomads in medieval Eurasia; the Turkic world's relations with Russia, Byzantium, the Caucasus, Iran, and the Islamic world; Turkic philology; early Hungarian history and Caucasian studies.

He devoted his first book to Khazar Studies (*An Historico-Philological Inquiry into the Origins of the Khazars*. 2 vols. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), followed by numerous monographs and studies published in the subsequent decades. His collection of valuable articles has also been published in two separate volumes under the titles: *Nomads and their Neighbors in the Russian Steppe. Turks, Khazars and Qipchaqs* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003) and *Turks and Khazars: Origins, Institutions, and Interactions in Pre-Mongolian Eurasia* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2010). His two most notable works are *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, 1992), which has been translated into several languages and is now awaiting its expanded second edition. The other one is *The King's Dictionary. The Rasûlid Hexaglot* (Leiden, 2000). This is a unique hexaglott, i.e. six-language dictionary (containing Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Greek, Armenian and Mongolian material) compiled in Yemen in the 14th century. This precious work was edited, published and commented by Peter Golden, with the participation of three Hungarian scholars Tibor Halasi Kun, Lajos Ligeti and Ödön Schütz.

Although scholarly work dominated his activities, he never ceased teaching throughout his life. After studying at Columbia University, he moved to Rutgers University, where he has been continuously present since his appointment as professor in 1984, has held the position of director of the institute twice, and has become a dominant figure in the faculty. He has received research fellowships countless times and has been a visiting professor at Columbia, Harvard, Princeton and Paris, among others.

He has pursued an extensive editorial work, was editor-in-chief of the *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* for decades, and a member of the editorial and advisory boards of more than twenty international journals, including the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' periodical, the *Acta Orientalia*. He is member of numerous scholarly societies, and Honorary Member of the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu) and of the Csoma de Kőrös Society of Hungarian Orientalists.

He has always had a close professional relationship with Hungarian Turkologists, Mongolists and researchers of Inner Asia. As mentioned earlier, his master, Tibor Halasi Kun, was also an honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

In sum, Peter B. Golden is an authoritative and decisive figure of international research into Central Eurasia who excels with the thoroughness, reliability, and depth of his knowledge. His works replete with novel approaches and results contributed considerably to the widening of our knowledge of the Central Eurasian field. His election to honorary membership is a great honour and a real asset for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

In his inaugural lecture, Peter B. Golden will address us on "The Present State of Khazar Studies", a question which is of uttermost interest to all Hungarian scholars dealing with the early history of the East European steppe region and early Hungarian history in the 6th–10th centuries.