

## PREFACE

First of all, we wish to express our warmest thanks to all the friends and colleagues of Professor Tapani Harviainen, who have contributed to this Festschrift. For a variety of reasons we were only able to send invitations to the potential contributors unusually late. Yet, despite the rigidly strict timetable, quite a number of them did find time to prepare an article, a concrete manifestation of the appreciation of Tapani Harviainen as both a scholar and a person among his colleagues.

To honour Tapani Harviainen, we invited his colleagues, students, and friends to contribute articles that would reflect his scholarly interests. On account of the exceptionally wide range of these, it was out of question that the Festschrift would be dedicated to one particular theme. We therefore decided to include articles from all the various fields in which Tapani has been involved. In this, at least, we have been successful: the topical range in this book nicely echoes Tapani's own career as a Semitist in the widest possible sense. Consequently, included are articles ranging from Greek loanwords in Syriac and the morphology of Mishnaic Hebrew to the Karaims of Eastern Europe and the Christian-Muslim encounter, and much more. All these nevertheless have a close link to Tapani's work either as a scholar or as a teacher or, in many cases, as both.

The diversity of languages dealt with in this volume is a tribute to Tapani as a polyglot, as a person who is highly interested in languages and who never misses an opportunity of developing his practical skills in the languages he knows.

The bibliography of Tapani Harviainen's publications included in this volume gives a detailed picture of his scholarly interests. Among them, three main topics of research areas stand out as especially dear to his heart. Ever since his M.A. thesis (1970) and his Ph.D. dissertation, *On the vocalism of the closed unstressed syllables in Hebrew* (1977), Biblical Hebrew and, particularly, its various pronunciation traditions have been Tapani's longtime passion for which he is well known. His profound knowledge of Hebrew played a key role in the official modern Finnish translation of the Bible (1992); in this exacting work Tapani was engaged for fourteen years.

Tapani Harviainen's second major field of interest is Aramaic magical literature, Aramaic magic bowl texts in particular. He has published both Jewish Aramaic and Syriac bowl texts, and he was the first to introduce the important concept of Eastern Aramaic "koiné" into the study of these texts. In addition to

linguistic peculiarities, he has also written on their religio-cultural background, especially on inter-confessional and syncretistic features with which these texts abound.

In recent years the Karaims and the Karaites have been Tapani Harviainen's main area of interest. In a number of articles he has dealt with many rather diverse questions concerning their linguistic and cultural heritage. Of special importance are his studies on the great Karaite manuscript collector Abraham Firkovich. In his studies on Karaims and Karaites, Tapani has both conducted field work among the Karaims of Lithuania and spent repeated research periods in the chambers of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, a fact which highlights his versatility as a scholar. The annual trips to St. Petersburg and Vilnius have also made him quite a specialist in many aspects of present-day Eastern Europe. A research visit with him to the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg is also a cultural tour illuminating Russian history, Orthodox Christianity, and ethnic or religious minorities in Russia. All this takes place in a jovial and cordial atmosphere in which all the aspects of life – scholarly work and leisure time with Russian friends – combine.

As a scholar, besides being many-faceted and enthusiastic, Tapani is very careful and patient. He takes the time to gather all the evidence pertaining to his topic, may this be attainable, say, in old Polish. He is a master of combining evidence from areas that, at least on the surface, are rather distantly related.

Those who have known Tapani as a teacher or as a supervisor – first as part-time teacher of Biblical Hebrew since the early 1970s, and from 1985 as Professor of Semitic languages at the University of Helsinki – are aware that he is an encouraging teacher who, at the same time, is committed to pedagogical punctuality and clarity. In line with his scholarly interests, the topics of his lectures vary greatly.

On behalf of all contributors to this Festschrift, we congratulate Tapani Harviainen on his sixtieth birthday and wish him many productive and rich years in his work with *Verbum et Calamus*, both studying and using the Word and the Pen.

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Hannu Juusola and Heikki Palva