

Translator's Preface

by Nowf Abdul-Majid Allawi

I WAS FIRST INTRODUCED to the diaries of Joseph Mathia Svoboda in 1985 when the late Professor Henry Louis Alexander Svoboda showed me a manuscript from his collection. At first glance, I was fascinated by Joseph Mathia's work and was very curious to read more of the diaries that he had written during the second half of the nineteenth century. 1985 marks the beginning of my work with Professor Svoboda on the diaries. His wish was to focus on material in the diaries dealing with the history of Iraq and to assemble it for publishing. Joseph Mathia's diaries number some 61 books but Professor Svoboda's collection contained only 39 documents most of them transcriptions made by Mrs. Margaret Makiya, an Iraqi researcher. Only a few of them were photocopies of the original diaries. This means that Professor Svoboda did not possess either transcriptions or photocopies of about 22 of the original diaries. Moreover, some of Margaret Makiya's transcribed diaries in his collection were incomplete and had many missing pages.

The difficult situation in Iraq during the last decades of the twentieth century combined with the large amount of material in the diaries and gaps in Professor Svoboda's collection did not allow us to finish our work. In the first months of 2005, Professor Henry Louis Svoboda showed me Alexander's travel journal. Upon the first reading, I found Alexander's text interesting and his colorful language, rich with English, French, Turkish and Persian words, was familiar to me from my schooling and my mother's Turkish origins. In the 1950's, a great number of words in Alexander's vocabulary still existed in the local dialect of Baghdad. So, together with Professor Svoboda, I embarked on a new project on the travel journal.

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We planned to transcribe the Arabic text of the Journal to prepare it for publication with an index of the foreign words and the names of officials. The idea to translate the Arabic journal came later. Because Alexander included an English text for his return journey to Baghdad, Professor Svoboda became interested in the idea of translating the Arabic part of the journal. After the first draft of my translation, we decided to expand our project to include the English translation in our publication. This was the second phase of our project, but regretfully it continued only for a short time. Prof. Svoboda passed away in October of 2005.

Devastated by his loss, I stopped working for a while and then contacted members of the Svoboda family. They were helpful and allowed me to take the documents I had left at Professor Svoboda's house in order to continue the work. However, the translation of the travel journal and the indexing proved to be far more difficult than I had anticipated and I found myself in need of a larger academic community. In one of those rare coincidences, while searching out Ottoman language dictionaries, I made the acquaintance of Walter G. Andrews, Professor of Ottoman and Turkish literature in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Washington. Professor Andrews has since lent his expertise, researchers, his time and energies to help the publication of Alexander Svoboda's travel journey come to fruition. I am very thankful for his kind and generous assistance and for all the time and the effort that he devoted to the translation of the travel journal. I am also thankful to all the students, staff, and faculty who worked on the book and its publication. Similarly, I want to acknowledge the support provided by the University of Washington at all stages in the making of this book.

Preface: History of the Project

by Walter G. Andrews

SINCE 1993, THE OTTOMAN TEXTS ARCHIVE PROJECT (OTAP) has focused on creating resources and techniques for the employment of digital technologies in the study, archiving, and dissemination of Ottoman texts. Its broad general mission is described as follows:

- ❖ To create resources that will enable scholars, researchers, decision-makers, and the general public to better understand a critical area of the world and one of the last great multi-ethnic empires.
- ❖ To effect radical positive change in the way in which primary resources from the Ottoman Empire are made available to a world-wide public.
- ❖ To contribute to a healthier, safer, and more secure world by providing the groundwork for better informed and more thoughtful interactions among nations and peoples.

The Svoboda Diaries Project is a sub-project of OTAP and has, for some time, been one of our most active and productive projects. It began with a 2006 email from Nowf Allawi and has since burgeoned into an exploration both of life in late 19th century Iraq and of new ways to make original source material available in the digital age. Beginning from Ms. Allawi's transcription and translation of Alexander Svoboda's Travel Journal, the project has grown into the Alexander

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Svoboda Diary Newbook Project, which is intended as a demonstration of the application of new technologies to providing economical access to previously unavailable primary source materials in multiple formats through multiple distribution channels for the use of scholarly and general audiences. Our present products, developed with the assistance of undergraduate and graduate student participants, include a Text Encoding Initiative compatible XML text, an annotated side-by-side web display of the translation and an Arabic script transcription of the Journal, a project wiki in which we are compiling information about the Journal, the Svoboda family, and 19th century Iraq, as well as this print publication and a forthcoming e-book version.

While the text-based outputs of the project are apparently similar in most respects to print-based publications of traditional scholarly editions with footnotes, standardized orthographies, and references to paper publications, there are significant differences. For example, notes and other features of the English translation are tied to the electronic mark-up of the Arabic transcription of the original text. The Arabic dialect of the Journal has features that will be unfamiliar to many speakers and readers of Arabic and when such features are explained in notes these notes will also appear in the English translation even though they will make no sense to those who do not know Arabic. By the same token notes to the English translation will also be accessible in the Arabic even though some of them will reference things that are obvious to Arabic speakers.

Over the past five years we have watched with intense anxiety as Nowf lived through the violent aftermath of the U. S. invasion of Iraq. To date Nowf and I have exchanged more than three thousand email messages as we struggled to complete a complex research and publication project over a long distance, through the chaos of war and civil disruption, which at times made such simple things as a visit to the library unbelievably hazardous for residents of Baghdad. In the course of

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this adventure, experiment, learning process, research and development project, intercultural communications effort... many wonderful and initially unexpected things emerged. We came into contact with the Svoboda family, who now have been scattered to the four corners of the globe where they appear to remain the same interesting, active, talented, and intelligent people that we encounter in their ancestors as recorded in the Svoboda diaries. They have been a joy to work with and unfailingly supportive of our project and have contributed invaluable family lore to our storehouse of background information. We say "Svoboda diaries" because, as we began to work with Nowf, we learned that Alexander's father was an avid keeper of diaries and compiled as many as 61, covering the years from about 1862 to 1908. A large number of these diaries are now in the National Manuscript Center in Baghdad, but they have not recently been inventoried and we are unsure how many remain there in what condition. However, Nowf also has had in her hands copies of transcriptions from 31 of the Joseph Mathia Svoboda diaries made in the 1970s by Margaret Makiya, a Baghdad researcher from a family of long-time Svoboda friends. From this material, she has been able extract copious information about the life of the Svobodas in Baghdad.

As the project grew in the academic version of genteel poverty, much of its progress was the consequence of the work of several generations of talented and hard-working undergraduate OTAP interns, both students of Arabic in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization and students working in other fields from history, international studies, linguistics, and French, to computer science and informatics. They did much of the painstaking work of marking up the text and researching for notes, with the occasional help of summer interns from other universities and colleges as well as local high schools and the guidance and assistance of a few exceptional graduate students. These interns have also presented the project in several undergraduate research symposia and other university-wide

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conferences. Our technical consultant Stacy Waters and I, who make up what passes for regular OTAP staff, have been assured by our former interns that their experiences with the project have been an important and, in some cases, transformative part of their undergraduate education.

The Travel Journal is now ready for publication in several media and several versions but this is only the first stage of the project. We intend to begin applying what we have learned to the publication of the Joseph Mathia Svoboda diaries starting with 10 of the original diaries brought from Iraq by Margaret Makiya and loaned to the University of Washington Libraries for digitizing. It is our hope and conviction that, in time, these diaries and the stories they contain will become a significant resource for the micro-history of 19th century Iraq and that the project will continue to provide an avenue for undergraduates to gain hands-on experience of basic research in the humanities and learn to familiarize themselves with digital tools for the study and dissemination of the products of that research.