

Preface

In 2012 three academic institutions – the Committee of Oriental Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Archive of Science of PAN & PAU, Cracow, with the assistance of the university departments of Oriental Studies in Poland, commemorated jointly centenary of the archaeological expedition of Władysław Kotwicz (1872–1944) to Mongolia in 1912. In the same year 2012 there also fell the 140th anniversary of the birth of W. Kotwicz. These two dates gave an occasion to organize an international conference and an exhibition which aimed at showing the achievements of one of the most eminent Polish scholars in the field of Oriental studies.

Władysław Kotwicz was born on 20 May 1872 in Ossowo near Lida. After completing his secondary school in Vilna (Vilnius) (1882–1890), W. Kotwicz entered 1891 the Petersburg University. He studied Far Eastern philology (Mongolian, Manchu, Chinese) at the Faculty of Eastern Languages. In 1905 Kotwicz obtained his first-degree diploma and from 1896 as a holder of a scholarship of the Faculty he joined the Eastern Section of the Chancellery of Ministry of Finances. From 1900 Kotwicz started teaching Mongolian (and later also Manchu) at the Petersburg University. This somewhat unusual combination of an academic position and the clerical work in the Ministry proved to be favourable since he could obtain a vast knowledge of the Far Eastern affairs (and especially of Mongolia and adjacent regions) and pursue his research. Kotwicz made several expeditions – in 1894, 1897, 1910, and 1917 to the steppes of Kalmykia, and in 1912 to Mongolia, where his destination was the Orkhon (Orqon) river valley.

During his 1912 expedition to Mongolia Kotwicz was accompanied by a Russian archaeologist K.A. Maskov and a Buryat scholar Ts. Jamtsarano. The gathered materials of their researches were abundant and scientifically important. W. Kotwicz has been presenting the results of his studies piece by piece in a series of papers.

In 1923 W. Kotwicz returned to Poland (independent since 1918) at the invitation of the John Casimir University in Lvov which offered him professorship and in 1924 assumed the chair of Far Eastern philology. Soon Professor Kotwicz displayed a manifold activity as a scholar and university teacher as well as organizer of Oriental studies in Poland. He was elected the first president of the newly founded (1922) Polish Oriental Society. In his capacity as an editor-in-chief of the annual journal of oriental studies

Rocznik Orientalistyczny (founded 1914) he edited volumes III–XIV. Later Professor Kotwicz became a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cracow.

Professor Władysław Kotwicz passed away on 3 October 1944 in Czarny Bór (near Vilnius). In a special issue of the journal *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* (*Mémorial Władysław Kotwicz (1872–1944)*, vol. XVI, 1953) beside the biographical sketch and bibliography of W. Kotwicz there appeared posthumously his large paper entitled *Studia nad językami altajskimi* [‘Studies about Altaic Languages’] edited by his former student, Marian Lewicki.

Kotwicz’s valuable collection of books and materials which luckily survived the stormy times of revolution and wars was brought after his demise to Poland – the library was donated to the University of Warsaw (to the Department of Mongolian Studies), and the private archives were deposited at the Archive of Science of PAN & PAU in Cracow. Kotwicz’s archives contain many materials of great scientific worth which await research and publication.

On the occasion of the centenary of Władysław Kotwicz’s 1912 expedition to Mongolia the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences published a special volume under the title *In the Heart of Mongolia. 100th Anniversary of W. Kotwicz’s Expedition to Mongolia in 1912. Studies and Selected Source Materials* (Cracow 2012), in which an international group of specialists offered their studies based on the rare materials preserved in Kotwicz’s archives.

The present volume of the journal *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* contains papers of the scholars who took part in the Third International Conference of Oriental Studies *Exploring Languages and Cultures of Asia. Prof. W. Kotwicz in Memoriam* held in Cracow from 15–17 November 2012 to commemorate the great scholar and his work.

Marek Mejor

Chairman
Committee of Oriental Sciences
of the Polish Academy of Sciences