

Editor's preface

This volume is dedicated to Professor Stanisław Piłaszewicz – a prominent Polish scholar working in the field of African studies. It is a great honour and pleasure for us to mark the occasion of his 70th birthday with a volume which includes articles focusing on the most spectacular area of his research interests, namely Hausa and Chadic studies. We would like to include the best wishes of the contributors and all of the Professor's colleagues, students and collaborators who have participated in celebrating his work.

The wide range of research carried out by Professor Stanisław Piłaszewicz over the course of his academic career finds its manifestation in this volume. His own work, reflected in a long list of publications, was initially based on linguistics and literature. Grounded in philology, with time it gradually extended to include cultural, religious and social issues. The articles of the volume deal with all the topics and research fields that are currently being investigated within Hausa and Chadic studies. The contributions of so many foreign scholars in the Festschrift show that Prof. Piłaszewicz's links with the international scholarly milieu are strong. On the other hand, three generations of the Professor's students who participate in the volume to honour his academic legacy reflect the inspiring impact he had on the young people.

With this celebratory volume, the importance of Hausa studies at the University of Warsaw is also confirmed, both in the field of teaching and in research. The years of Professor Piłaszewicz's headship of the Department of African Languages and Cultures in 1988–2009 are significant in terms of his personal development but also that of the institution. "The golden years" of Hausa studies in Poland were marked by a relatively large number of students learning Hausa, the granting of academic degrees of various levels, and a significant advance in international co-operation in the area of Hausa studies. At that time, many students were able to study Hausa at the universities in Europe and at Bayero University, Kano in Nigeria. Such internalization was also important for the staff members who were able to free themselves from being perceived as scholars from a communist country from behind the iron curtain working in the field of African studies. Thanks to the substantial help of our colleagues from Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain,

and our co-operation with Russian Africanists, the Polish scholars were included into the international network of studies on Hausa language and literature, and – more widely – into Chadic studies. This established the University of Warsaw as one of the strongest centres of Hausa studies in the world.

The volume also acknowledges the ‘African’ experience of Prof. Piłaszewicz, who has maintained contacts with students and collaborators established at universities in Nigeria. This aspect conforms to the idea of the volume as joining the West, the East and Africa together – here – in Warsaw. This idea is valuable for the development of African (including Hausa) studies in Poland in future decades.

Finally, the Festschrift is a valuable contribution to the development of African studies as a discipline. It combines the achievements of the ‘giants’ of Chadic studies with the research interests of new generations of scholars, using various kinds of sources, including both African and European, in their studies on African languages, cultures and history. We thank all our Colleagues who have kindly agreed to participate in this volume as Authors. The fact that Professor Piłaszewicz’s jubilee has provoked this joint publication is an honour for the academic society of Oriental Studies in Poland and African Studies in particular.

Editors