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Preface

The present volume of “Rocznik Orientalistyczny” includes a selection of articles written on the basis of papers read during the *6th International Conference of Oriental Studies: Rare, Forgotten and Endangered Languages and Literatures* which was held at the University of Warsaw, November 14th–16th, 2017. The conference was organized jointly by the Committee of Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw. On that occasion we celebrated together the 85th anniversary of the establishment of the Institute (now Faculty) of Oriental Studies in the University of Warsaw (1932–2017).

During the conference Professor Edward Tryjarski, an eminent Polish Turcologist, an honorary member of the Committee of Oriental Studies, senior of Polish Orientalists, was presented with a book *Armeno-Kipchak Studies. Collected Papers* consisting of his articles written over a period of fifty years (published in the series “Prace Orientalistyczne” by the Committee of Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, by Publishing House ELIPSA, Warsaw 2017). Moreover, at the special conference session devoted to the Armeno-Kipchak language and literature Professor Tryjarski presented an overview of the current state of studies on that subject.

The theme of the present conference – rare, forgotten and endangered languages and literatures of Asia and Africa – has become the focus of research of many scholars who attempt to investigate, restore and protect the world cultural heritage. There are people and languages extinct since long time, some of them are well documented and studied while other have been discovered or rediscovered relatively recently. On the other hand we are witnessing with anxiety that many still existing languages are on the edge of extinction.

Some languages, like the Armeno-Kipchak, can be studied only from the literary sources which have survived until now, what was demonstrated by Edward Tryjarski. A comparative study of a certain segment of lexica in the Early Mandarin Chinese and the Middle Mongolian can be helpful in understanding development of both languages as one can learn from a paper by Ákos Bertalan Apatóczyky. Studies on the different writing systems may also bring interesting data, here represented by an article on the attempts to use Cyrillic script for the Mongolian language by Vladimir Uspensky.

Some languages, like the language of Karaims, although still in use, have to struggle for their future existence as well as for their proper understanding. These problems are

raised and studied in the present volume by Michał Németh and Murat Işık. A separate group of papers is devoted to Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman languages – contributions by Petra Maurer, Mark Turin and Benjamin Chung. Western Iranian dialects are studied by Gohar Hakobian.

There are also studies on rare or little known literatures in this volume, like the article on Buddhist polemical texts by Stanisław Kania and on Sanskrit literature written by Kerala women by Lidia Sudyka; on specific Turkic literature composed by the Azerbaijani emigrants in Poland in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century by Shahla Kazimova; and on a novel of the Bashkir writer – by Viacheslav Chernev, as well as on Polish literature based on Japanese themes by Anna Zalewska.

Songs and oral literature are very important sources of knowledge of the indigenous cultures. They are the subject of articles focusing on the songs of Tunisian women by Jamila Oueslati and on the folklore of San people from the South Africa by Patrycja Kozieł.

It is believed that the present volume of collected papers focusing on the rare and endangered languages and literatures covering both distant epochs and different geographical regions ranging from the eastern part of Eurasia to Southern Africa, will contribute to their better understanding and perhaps also to preserve them for posterity.

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Editors of "Rocznik Orientalistyczny", volume 71 (2)