

I n t r o d u c t i o n

Carl Jaspers wrote that for the first time ever our age has given us a chance to grasp and understand the universal history and culture of mankind. Jaspers' memorable reflection from his *Sinn und Ziel der Geschichte* only occurred to me when I was editing *Folia Orientalia* 52 in memoriam Andree Zaborski. This volume is a reflection of Jaspers' noble ideals of unity and understanding across time, space, cultures, and languages. The intellectual content of Professor Andrzej Zaborski's epitaphic volume is very impressive. The reader can find syntactic and lexicographic studies, etymology and literary narrative techniques, comparative Afro-Asiatic linguistics; and the theory and practice of translation, which Andrzej Zaborski loved so much. The reader can also find the first text edition of a medieval Arabic literary work, Ugaritic and Berber lexicographic studies, and the Hebrew verbal system, the Berber grammar and Somali poetics, ethnic minorities and the Mandeans with their very ancient history, and a paper on the history of modern painting. The Hebrew Bible neighbours on the Arab literary lore with the Qurān and early Christian Greek and Latin letters. This volume's reader will be like an art lover facing an impressive gallery of ancient and modern, spoken and literary languages: Berber, modern and Classical Arabic, with Andalusi, Mesopotamian and Southern Arabic included, and Syriac, Classical Hebrew, the Semitic languages of Eritrea, Tigre and Bure, the Chadic languages, and New Persian, all in an English, Italian, German, and French framework. The geographic span of the contributors is not less meaningful. It ranges from South Africa through Naples, Heidelberg, and Leiden to Oslo; from Haifa and Moscow via Prague, Kraków and Warsaw, Lyon and Marseille to Zaragoza and Seville.

In the contemporary world dominated by the media, which all too frequently offer only a shallow analysis, and selected and distorted information reflected in antiquated, stereotype views of the Other, this volume brings true knowledge, real expertise, a deep insight into Africa and Western Asia with their ancient, medieval and modern culture and languages, their old noble traditions, their oral and literary lore. Faced with this collection of papers, the editor felt something like a wind blowing from the pages, a wind from endless deserts and savannas, and monumental, winding *wadis*. In my view it is also important that this

volume is coming out at a time when a vast part of Africa and Western Asia is in flames, manifesting human suffering and misery of every sort, the scope of which neither historian, nor documentary, nor any work of literature and art can grasp, because it *cannot be grasped* or even adequately documented.

I feel greatly honoured to be the editor of this volume. Your response has exceeded all my expectations. Andrzej Zaborski's intellectual legacy and, let me say it, his spiritual patronage proved to be fruitful and inspiring. Compelled by financial restrictions I had to squeeze the original volume at the last stage of the editorial work. I had to remove three extensive papers. I am saying this with regret and the feeling of loss. My paper is one of them. If the authors do not withdraw their papers they will be published in *Folia Orientalia* 53, 2016. Many thanks to all of you.

Tomasz Polański
Editor of the Volume