

POLSKA AKADEMIA NAUK – ODDZIAŁ W KRAKOWIE
KOMISJA ORIENTALISTYCZNA

FOLIA ORIENTALIA

VOL. XXXIV

1998

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SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

Sixteenth International Meeting

CRACOW, July 19-22, 1998

Kraków

1998

FOLIA ORIENTALIA
Review of Oriental Research edited by
Oriental Committee - Cracow Branch
Polish Academy of Sciences

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TO THE INSTITUTE OF THE ORIENTAL PHILOLOGY, JAGIELLONIAN
UNIVERSITY, CRACOW, FOR A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE COSTS
OF PUBLICATION ON THE VOLUME XXXIV, 1998,
*

Published once a year.
Manuscripts for publications, books for review, and all correspondence concern-
ing editorial matter should be sent to:

Secretary, "Folia Orientalia"
Komisja Orientalistyczna PAN
ul. św. Jana 28,
31-018 Kraków, Poland

ISSN 0015-5675
*

Distributed by:
The Enigma Press, ul. Borsucza 3/58., 30-408 Kraków, Poland
Fax: [48 12] 422-67-93 ; Tel. [48 12] 267-41-24; E-mail:
zjkapera@vela.filg.uj.edu.pl
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Bielskie Zakłady Graficzne - Sp. z o. o.
Printed in Poland

Freie Universität Berlin
B 912 99/8127
Institut für Turkologie

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FOLIA ORIENTALIA
VOL. 34 1998
PL ISSN 0015-5675

JERZY CHMIEL
Pontifical Theological Academy
Cracow

OPENING ADDRESS

Mr President, Mr Executive Director
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear and distinguished Guests and Friends,

On behalf of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow as its vice-rector and on behalf of the Oriental Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences - Cracow Branch as its chairman, I have pleasure in welcoming all of you in Cracow, a city full of historical monuments and relics and at the same time, aspiring to keep up with contemporary times and merge the past with the 21st century.

Let me emphasise the fact that the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature 1998 in Cracow is not a coincidence.

Cracow University, now for many years called the Jagiellonian University, one of the oldest European universities, was established in 1364. Last year we celebrated the sixcentenary of the foundation of the Faculty of Theology at the University. In 1397 the young Queen of Poland, Saint Hedwig (Jadwiga, 25), wife of King Władysław Jagiełło, sensing her own death, donated all her jewellery for the purpose of re-founding the Cracow University. With this act a new academic year was officially opened. The Faculty of Theology ranked highest in the University's hierarchy. It was to serve the work of evangelization of the vast Lithuanian-Russian lands.

Next year, 1999, will mark the quatercentenary of the publication of, not the first but the best, Polish translation of the Bible by Jakub Wujek, a Jesuit theologian and translator.

Cracow will greet the year 2000 as a "European City of Culture". The history of the Jagiellonian University forms an essential part of Polish history. It is also part of the European cultural heritage. Cracow and the Wawel