Introduction

Preface

Twenty years ago, Denis Sinor, one of the founding fathers of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC) and its Secretary General from 1960 to 2007, composed a short history of the PIAC for the 40th Meeting in Provo, Utah/USA (1997) which was later published in the Proceedings of this Meeting.[1253] One of the most active promoters of the PIAC over decades, Sinor (1916–2011) remembers here the modest beginnings of those annual gatherings of Altaists from all over the world. In his amusing style, he illustrates how the number of participants grew over the years. Many of the internationally prominent specialists of Turkic, Mongol, and Manchu-Tunguz—in short, Altaic—Studies gathered in a friendly and informal atmosphere. Even in the times of the Cold War, the meetings were able to bridge over the political differences of the respective countries, bringing together scholars from East and West. The comprehensive character of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference is also reflected in the so-called PIAC gold medal (Indiana University Prize for Altaic Studies), established in 1962. Between 1963 and 2014 the medal was awarded to 50 scholars from 17 countries for an outstanding contribution to the advancement of Altaic Studies.

At the 50th Meeting (2007), more than 100 Altaists and specialists from neighboring disciplines gathered in Kazan, Tatarstan/Russian Federation, but Denis Sinor, for the first time in 50 years, was not able to participate. Many of the prominent scholars of Altaic Studies whose presence highlighted the PIAC Meetings over decades are no longer among us, but their work remains a priceless heritage for future generations.

Ten years on, no PIAC friend will ignore the fact that the international scientific world has considerably changed in the face of new methods and technical possibilities as well as of new political conditions. Moreover, Altaic Studies have changed by taking a different form and different contents. When in 1957 the field of Altaic Studies was perceived as “an arcane and little known field,” as Denis Sinor writes in 1997, today they are more closely imbedded in a number of specialized fields of research such as Turkic and Mongolian Studies, Tunguz and Manchu Studies, Sinology, Japanology, and Central Asian Studies, each of them understood in a wide diversity of disciplinary specializations such as linguistics, philology, history, anthropology, religious studies, history of art—to name just a few.

Today, we have possibly reached a point where we discuss, or explore anew, the scientific rationale of pursuing Altaic Studies. In this situation it might be helpful to remember that all scholarly endeavors unavoidably constitute a process where ready answers are not adequate. Looking back to the historical development of a given field of research will make this process more transparent and permit to envisage the pos-
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sibilities of future research more clearly. It is in this sense that this bibliography of articles published in the proceedings of past PIAC meetings is presented at the 60th Meeting.

The fact that the PIAC Meeting takes place in Hungary for the fifth time offers a welcome opportunity to remind us of the pioneering achievements of Hungarian scholars in the field of Altaic Studies in their widest sense.

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