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On Oceania at the Jagiellonian University

The 9th Conference of the Australia, New Zealand and Oceania Research Association *Oceania – Centre of the Pacific Rim*. Kraków, (21 October, 2017), The Institute of Middle and Far East Studies and the Australia, New Zealand and Oceania Research Association (ANZORA).

The Australia, New Zealand and Oceania Research Association (ANZORA) organized its 9th conference under the title *Oceania – Centre of the Pacific Rim*. For the first time in the ANZORA's history, the whole organizing process was made with another partner, that is the Institute of Middle and Far East Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. Therefore the place of the speeches was not anymore outside the University but within the main building – the Auditorium Maximum. Despite the fact that ANZORA is an independent association, most of its founders graduated the Jagiellonian University. In addition, Dr Dariusz Zdziech, author of the idea of gathering academics and enthusiasts of the Pacific in a formal association, works himself in the Institute of Middle and Far East Studies.

The Pacific Ocean is the biggest of the Earth's oceanic divisions, subdivided by the equator into the North Pacific Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean. There are 42 sovereign bordering countries and 23 dependent territories. Those states are considered to be the Pacific Rim. The recently established informal cooperation within the Pacific Rim cannot be left unsaid. That relates as well to the Polish academia. The idea of cooperation within the Pacific Rim was born in 1989 during the Canberra meeting through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). It has to be remembered, though, the Pacific region is a place where the world's power, such as the United States of America, Russia, China and Japan, cross their influences. Oceania in turn

is a collective name for the islands, both independent and subordinated states, on the Central and South-West Pacific Ocean. Nonetheless, the fact of small in size but equal members of the United Nation is very often forgotten or overlooked. All of this makes the Pacific very important geopolitically. In addition, the oceanic region gradually takes primacy back from the Atlantic community. From this reason, more and more scholars call the 21st century as 'the Pacific century'.

The date of the conference was not chosen by accident. On the weekend of 21st and October, 22 2017 there was organized the Travenalia voyaging festival. Since 2010 this event is growing in scale, elaborating partner actions and seminars, all through the Jagiellonian University's good offices along its sponsorship. "Oceania – Centre of the Pacific Rim" turned to be the perfect academic addition to embellish the Travenalia. The conference took place on the first day of the festival, while on the latter – four of the ANZORA members were explaining the realities of living in the Pacific.

Promoting of the Pacific region in Poland and among the scientists and other enthusiasts, especially travellers, appears to be one of the most significant values of the association. The first aim is clearly development of the Polish science by conducting scientific researches on any subjects relating to Australia, New Zealand and Oceania. Cooperation with the Jagiellonian University (main organizer of the Travenalia) allowed on self-promotion of ANZORA, which itself might not reach every interested person. Dual commitment allowed at the same time to attract participants of the travelling festival. Students of the Jagiellonian University, globetrotters and whole families were very absorbed in the ANZORA's stand with the Pacific related books and the Rapa Nui exhibition. The pictures were made by the former Ambassador in Chile and Argentina, Prof. Zdzisław Jan Ryn, during many of his academic journeys as a professor of medical science with the Jagiellonian University Medical College.

For the first time, the 2017 conference was held in English, which indeed served to extend the scope of participants to international ones. Two articles were sent from the Faculty of Law at the Jagannath University Dhaka in Bangladesh and the International Relations Institute at the Federal University for the Latin American Integration in Brazil. First speech related to the constitutional protection of right to property in Bangladesh, New Zealand and Poland, while the other – the dispute between the Marshall Islands and the United Kingdom at the International Court of Justice. The conference was inaugurated by the Ambassador of Australia in Poland, Czech and Lithuania, Mr Paul Wojciechowski. His opening remarks concerned the valid issue of refugees in the Pacific, along with the official policy on migration presented by the Australian government.

A broad topic of this year's conference allowed various academics from different disciplines to present their researches taking into consideration the Pacific region. It needs to be underlined that not all participants were at the same time the ANZORA members. Nonetheless, after very conference, the new members, who not always deal with Oceania, decide to enrol themselves to the association. The wider perspective on the region under research led in fact to better understanding and further, proper analysis of the Pacific by the Polish academia. The topic "Oceania – Centre of the Pacific Rim" attracted lawyers, political scientists, international relations scientists, anthropologists, historians, a nuclear physicist, a chemist and a sailor. The conference was divided into three panels. "Oceania on the political crossroads" was the title of the first panel where history, international relations and law related speeches were presented. After the coffee break, the second panel "Oceania's diversity and cultural richness" was held with emphasis on music, film, and craft presentations. Panel III was the last one but it did not finish the whole conference. "The role of Oceania countries in the Pacific development" was a discussion focused on the Pacific trade, tourism, agriculture and science.

Between the panels there was organized a general meeting of the ANZORA members. In accordance with its statute, the association (through the elections) has to choose a board of three members: president, vice-president and treasurer. Eventually, Dr. Joanna Siekiera (my humble self) from the Warsaw School of Economics was elected a president, M.A. Agnieszka Kandzia-Poździał from the University of Silesia in Katowice – as a vice-president and Ass. Prof. Zuzanna Jakubowska-Vorbrich from the University of Warsaw – as a treasurer. The final opportunity to discuss the conference topics was during the Pacific dinner, organized by one of the ANZORA member, Mrs Ilona Zdziech, who is specialising in the Pacific history and cuisine.

Last but not least, Prof. Zdzisław Jan Ryn gave a prologue to the film by National Geographic from 2009 called "Easter Island Underworld". As the second language of the former Ambassador is Spanish, he has surprised everyone at the audience using this language while not English. Participants of the conference, travellers from the Travenalia festival and the audience composed mainly by the Jagiellonian University students had the opportunity to explore the secrets of Rapa Nui.

The next ANZORA conference is scheduled on December 2018. It will be organized during the prestigious United Nations Climate Change conference, so-called Conference of the Parties, "COP". COP24 will take place in Katowice on 3–14 December. Poland, in such a short term, was chosen for the second time to be host for this conference. COP19 took place in Warsaw on 11–23 November 2013.

The post-conference book after the 9th Conference of the Australia, New Zealand and Oceania Research Association “Oceania – Centre of the Pacific Rim” will be published by the Jagiellonian University Press early next year.

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