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## Centre for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Cracow

In response to the increasing interest in the cultural and historical interactions between the Mediterranean and Asia, Jesuit University Ignatianum in Cracow has established a Centre for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies.

Over the centuries, the historical and cultural connections between the Mediterranean and Asian regions have been marked by a rich tapestry of interactions. These exchanges encompassed not only commercial activities but also religious, technological, and cultural aspects. Understanding these complex relationships is essential, particularly for defining the conditions for future international cooperation.

China, Korea, and Japan now play significant roles on the international stage. The Western world first encountered these societies at the dawn of the modern era. In the early phase of this contact, interactions primarily involved exchanges of ideas, with Jesuit missionaries playing a pivotal role. In the second half of the 19th century, cultural interactions were further influenced by political and economic factors, leading to partial Westernization of these societies. In the past three decades, tensions between Chinese and Western civilizations have emerged, largely driven by political and economic rivalries. These tensions are compounded by

a deep crisis within Western civilization itself, marked by a weakening social fabric and diminishing sense of identity. This crisis is closely related to modern generations' departure from Christian religion and Greco-Roman traditions, which historically bonded Western civilization. Cultural historians at Ignatianum have highlighted that Jesuit missionaries active in Northeast Asia during the 16th and 17th centuries—such as Poles Michał Boym, Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, and Andrzej Rudomina—left behind a valuable archive of early contacts between Mediterranean civilization and the Asian world. A team of researchers at Ignatianum is currently examining these materials as part of grant projects under the Science for Society and National Science Development Program.

One of the Centre's key sources of intellectual inspiration is the scientific work of the Jesuit order during the early phase of globalization. This work involved studying and understanding great non-European civilizations through the tools of the Western classical tradition, which was based on Latin and ancient Greek, and extended to languages such as Sanskrit, Chinese characters, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish. A central task for the Centre will be to conduct joint research on source texts written in these languages, utilizing Jesuit archives that predominantly contain materials in Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and French.

In addition to philological research, the Centre for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies emphasizes the study of universal history within the various social and political contexts where the Jesuit order operated. This includes tribal cultures in the Philippines, major urban centers in India, and the capitals of empires such as Beijing, Istanbul, and Isfahan. Jesuit activities in these regions encompassed religious, political, economic, scientific, artistic, military, and educational spheres, requiring an interdisciplinary approach that integrates methods from history, cultural studies, and religious studies. The Centre's primary objective is to conduct research on the transformations and intercultural relations across Eurasia from ancient to modern times, using source texts. It brings together scholars from diverse humanities disciplines, both from Ignatianum and through collaboration with specialists from other national and international institutions. As a scientific unit, the Centre aims to advance knowledge of the cultural, social, and religious conditions that have shaped these regions throughout history. It will also focus on developing research, organizing specialized doctoral programs, workshops, summer schools, and online courses to educate students and collaborate with scholars globally.

A key responsibility of the Centre is to organize conferences and symposia that foster international collaboration with universities and research

institutes worldwide, particularly in the USA, Germany, Italy, Greece, China, Japan, Korea, and the countries of the Middle East and Central Asia. The Centre is also committed to advancing innovative research methods through the use of technological tools, such as digital archives and databases, which will be made accessible to the global scientific community.

In this context, the *Ignatianum Philosophical Yearbook* is intended to serve as a platform for publishing the results of the Centre's research.

