

East Asian Studies in Hungary

A short report on the visit of three academic institutions working on East Asia in Budapest during October 2001

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The **Department of Japan, East and South East Asia at the Institute for World Economies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences** is a pure research institute with no formal teaching obligations. The members of the department, however, are offering various courses at the faculties for economics or East Asia studies of universities in Budapest and surrounding cities.

The department consists of five researchers:

- Dr. Andreás Hernádi (director) is working mainly on the Japanese economy, the role of Asia Pacific in the world economy and the topic of consumption.
- Dr. Klára Mészáros is the China specialist of the department, focussing on Greater China, overseas Chinese and technological development in China. Besides that she covers the whole range of China related topics including culture and politics.
- Zoltán Bassa is covering Korea, Vietnam and Indochina in general.
- Two other researchers concentrate on the concepts and pragmatic approaches of ASEAN & APEC and the economies of Australia, India and New Zealand. In addition some researchers based in other departments of the Institute sometimes work on topics related to East Asia. The department takes part in the publication of the Institute's working paper series "Institute of World Economies – Working Papers".

Formal international co-operation programmes exist with various institutes in East Asia:

- Japan: Kyoto Institute of Economic Research, Keizai Koho Center, Hosei University,
- China: China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, Institute of East European, Russian and Central Asian Studies, (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences),
- Taiwan: Chung-Hua Institute of Economic Research,
- South Korea: Research Institute of International Affairs, Institute of Social Sciences of Seoul National University, Korea Development Institute,
- Vietnam: National Center of Social Sciences and Humanities).

The institute's library was founded as the library of the "Afro-Asian Research Centre"

and has therefore a large stock of literature on developing economies. With the new name “Institute for World Economy” taken in 1973, the focus of the collection changed somewhat to global economic problems including the industrialized countries. Recent mergers with smaller libraries of departments, dealing with sociological and political sciences, have added corresponding literature. The literature is mainly in Hungarian and the dominating western languages English, German, French. Literature in Chinese or Japanese is in the absolute minority. The library used to be open for the public, but has been closed for the public when the institute moved to its new address on fortress hill.

The **Budapest College of Economics** is not conducting any specific research or teaching in the field of social sciences focussing on East Asia. The college is first of all a business school offering a three year BA in business administration. The Department of Oriental languages is providing language training in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean to the students, which are obliged to study two foreign languages. Most of them, however, choose to study English, German, Spanish or French, leaving the Department of Oriental languages with only a comparatively small number of students (with respect to Korean there seems to be no more than a handful). With respect to linguistics, methods of language teaching etc., however, there seems to be a considerable research effort and output.

The **Budapest University of Economic Sciences** does not possess an institutionalised curriculum on East Asia. Prof. Dr. Jozsef Móczár, who has been living in Japan for two years and has published a book on Japan’s economy, understands himself first of all as an quantitative economist and not as an explicit Japan specialist. His research interest in Japan is based on the conviction that Japan’s statistical data are very reliable and therefore an ideal “fodder” for his mathematical models of economic growth. Prof. Móczár is a specialist for economic growth modelling, who “by chance” has done some (thorough) research on the Japanese growth experience. He claims his model explains Japan’s growth, but does not fit for Hungary where statistical data seem to be deficient. Right now he is doing research on bubbles in economic growth – which has some obvious applications with respect to Japan.

Efforts to contact and arrange meetings with two further institutes failed. Due to their research focus lying outside the core of social sciences these institutions are not on the priority list of potential co-operation partners. The Department of East Asia Studies at the Eötvös Lorand University is led by Gergely Salát, who is working on the history of Chinese law. Mr. Salát has just received his diploma from the Budapest College of Business administration and is therefore still very young. Dr. Éva Ozsvald is representing Japanese studies at the Institute of Economics of the Hungarian Academy

of Sciences. (Senior researcher Mr. Gábor Bakos is currently on leave at Kyoto Women's University). Dr. Ozsvald has just finished her Ph. D. thesis on 50 years of economic development in Japan.

In perspective Hungarian research and teaching in social sciences focused on East Asia seems to be rather underdeveloped. No BA, MA programmes etc. dealing specifically with East Asian economics, politics etc. are offered. And only a handful of researchers seems to conduct serious work in these fields. Their presence in international conferences and journals is highly restricted, which may be explained to a certain extent by an insufficient knowledge of the English language and funding problems. But as one of the interview partners claimed, many researchers and institutions still have not shed the old socialist thinking and lack in entrepreneurial spirit.

Especially with respect to China the situation seems to have deteriorated in recent years. Well known researchers like Barna Talás have retired, or have gone abroad like Janos Kornai, with no younger researchers filling their positions. Klára Mészáros seems to be the only person doing serious research on contemporary China.