

East Asian Studies in Poland

Warsaw during January 2002

Thomas Heberer

The following contribution is based on a visit in Warsaw in January 2002. It summarizes and describes the situation of East Asian Studies in the Polish capital. Polish scholars consider Warsaw to be the centre of East Asian studies in Poland. Furthermore, smaller institutions exist in Krakow, Poznan, Steszew and Lublin.

1. Summary: Main features of East Asian Studies in Poland

- 1) Warsaw is apparently the centre of East Asian Studies in the country. Research is concentrated at two institutions: The *Centre for Studies on Non-European Countries* under the *Polish Academy of Social Sciences* and the *Asia-Pacific Centre* of the *Institute of Political Science* of the same Academy. Both of them are research units without teaching programs. Yet, most of the scholars are involved in teaching activities at Warsaw University and at various private institutions of higher learning.
- 2) Study courses on East Asia are primarily focusing on language, history and culture. Warsaw University seems to be the only institution with a respective teaching program.
- 3) As a socialist legacy, research on former or current socialist countries (like China, Vietnam, North Korea, Mongolia) is stronger than that on Japan or other countries of East and Southeast Asia. Yet, Warsaw University has a strong Japanese department.
- 4) Cooperation with academic institutions abroad are primarily based on institutional contacts established during the socialist era. There are few new cooperation partners, as Polish institutions lack the necessary funding for a continuous scholarly exchange. Recently, Taiwanese institutions are enhancing cooperation programs. They provide a certain amount of funding, but due rather to political than academic reasons. Interestingly, the only map at the wall of the Asia-Pacific Centre was a map of Taiwan.
- 5) According to informations of Polish scholars the knowledge of the situation in China or Vietnam among the Polish population as well as among the political elite is rather rudimentary. The perception prevails that both countries were totalitarian countries similar to North Korea. Processes of reforms and change are largely unknown. This contributes to the lack of interest in developments of East Asian

countries.

- 6) Still, there is a strong interest in cooperation with partners in Western Europe as far as academic exchange, joint conferences and publications are concerned.

2. Major Institutions of East Asian Studies in Warsaw

The **Centre for Studies on Non-European Countries** of the *Polish Academy of Sciences* was established in 1978 and conducts interdisciplinary research (combining sociology, economics, history, and political science). The Academy is subordinated to the *State's Committee for Scientific Research* which supervises it. The Committee allocates finances and salaries but on a very limited basis only. Low funding is the case in all institutes of the Academy. In the 90es many institutes were closed due to funding problems.

This Centre is the only institute conducting research in non-European cultures and developing countries concurrently. According to its director it has a high reputation in the Poland's research ranking. That means that its work could be considered to be successful, a major precondition for requiring financial support by the state. The Academy is one of the last institutions funded by the state, though its future is rather uncertain.

Originally, the Centre was founded as the Institute of African literature. At the end of the 80es it had a staff of more than 40 researchers, engaged in different fields of research: Latin America, Africa and Asia, with special emphasis on cultural factors of development. Currently, the Centre has employed three professors and associate professors and seven persons with the academic degree of a doctor. Currently, eleven researchers are employed. Meanwhile, the majority has merely a part-time job, and the domains of research have decreased. Latin America as a field of research has ceased to exist, research on Africa is continued, but on a very limited scale. The Far East, particularly Chinese Studies, are one of the major fields. Three scholars are focusing on that region: Prof. Roman M. Slawinski (Chinese history, especially Ming dynasty), Prof. Karin Tomala (contemporary China), and Dr. Teresa Halinski (Vietnamese Studies). Dr. Halinka recently has conducted a survey on Vietnamese people in Poland, in cooperation with the Institute of Social Studies of the Academy. A publication is in print (topic: Integration or isolation of Vietnamese people in Poland). The study was funded by the State's Committee for Scientific Research.

Japan and Korea are not included in the Centre's activities, whereas Middle East and

Islamic Studies, including studies on Islamic issues in South-East Asia, Muslim fundamentalism, and on the relationship between Islam and democracy, are strong pillars of research. Another field of research has to do with globalization and marginalization in economic spheres. The director of the Centre, Prof. Jerzy Zdanowski, is engaged in Middle East Studies. Yet, there are plans to extend the Centre's program to Japan and Korea.

Currently, the government does not financially support the library, e.g. subscriptions of periodicals, purchase of new publications, or attending or organizing workshops or conferences. The library of the Centre comprises 16,000 volumes, primarily on contemporary issues, including about 50 periodicals. Yet, there is no librarian at present. And every year funding is insecure.

In the 90es a system of grants was established. Every year each member of the institute has to put forward a research proposal that has to be approved by the above mentioned Committee. Both, individual and collective proposals are possible. If a proposal is approved by the Committee it will be financially supported by the government. Furthermore, a system of credit points was established in the 90es. A certain amount of points is given for articles published in refereed journals, for publications in English, books and policy papers written for government institutions. Publications in English receive a four times higher assessment than those written in Polish. An institution obtaining a high amount of credit points gets a higher ranking and thus more funding and vice versa.

There are some foundations that support the Centre. In 1997, for instance, an international conference on human rights and civil society in non-European societies, organized by Prof. Tomala, was funded by Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. In 1999 a joint colloquium together with the University of Lodz was initiated, focusing on the issue of globalization and cultural change. In the year 2000 a conference on literature and philosophy sponsored by Taiwanese institutions was conducted. In the same year, in cooperation with the Institute of Economics under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a joint conference on the topic "China and Poland in the Process of Change" was organized. Besides this the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation every year provides books and periodicals in German language.

Unfortunately, there is a dramatic lack of younger scholars. As salaries are low qualified young people are not interested in a job in the Academy's institutes. Only less qualified persons apply for a position. Currently, the youngest scholar here is aged 45. Albeit the director has introduced a kind of "head hunting", it is difficult to find somebody

interested in working here. Recently a young archeologist was found who after some "advice" more or less has agreed to work on contemporary issues of East Asia.

This institute has only a few cooperation partners abroad. In China this is the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The cooperation program is part of an agreement between China and Poland. Currently, there is a joint research project on modern Chinese history. The participation of other European scholars would certainly be welcomed. The oldest cooperation, since nearly 30 years, exists with the Institute of Development Studies in Helsinki. A recent joint project on state and society in Africa was funded by UNESCO, including a workshop in that region.

Several times they attempted to acquire EU funding. Three researchers were involved in such projects, particularly in projects on Muslim issues. There is also a joint project with the Centre of Ethnic Studies in Stockholm, including common publications. Last year a delegation of Tamkang University in Taipeh/Taiwan headed by its president visited the Academy, and there is a new cooperation agreement between this Centre and Tamkang University since July 2001. This year the director of the Centre intends to visit Taiwan on invitation of the president of Tamkang University.

Two yearbooks are published. One is called *Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies*. Volume 16 was published in 2001. The last two issues focused on distinct topics: The 2001 issue on cultural, social development and globalization in regards to non-European countries; the year 2000 issue on the Far East. The second one is *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*. So far, till the year 2001 14 issues had been published, including contributions on East Asia and Muslim countries. Among the authors of both publications we find foreign scholars, too. The articles in both annuals are primarily in English, a few ones in French or German. They annuals also include book reviews. A third publication *Materialy i Studia Zakladu Krajow Pozaeuropejskich PAN* (Materials and Studies of the Centre for Studies on Non-European Countries) comes out irregularly.

Unfortunately there is not enough money to publish the annuals on a regular basis. Therefore, they are looking for a partner interested in a joint publication. Currently, they consider to publish one of the yearbooks in cooperation with Taiwan's Tamkang University.

Furthermore, monographs on various topics in Polish are published, recently on Taiwan history or developments in South Asia.

Each researcher has several jobs. Some have two to three, one researcher even 17 different jobs, as the salary from this Centre is not sufficient to make a living. The director of the institute is for instance teaching in the Private School of Commerce that has a joint Master program (Master in Economics) with Erasmus University in Rotterdam. The salaries' issue is the crucial issue that has an tremendous negative impact on the development of research.

A major problem facing the Centre is that during the period of transformation in Poland there exists only little interest in development issues in non-European countries, though, after September 11th the government's interest has slightly increased. Yet, in this case the reason for this interest is the issue of danger and not an interest in development issues.

There also exists an *Association for Oriental Studies* which is poor and rather elitist, an association for 'dignitaries', as scholars of the Centre call it. It publishes the yearbook *Oriental Review*, a useful chronicle of events, reflecting the activities of the association's members. Moreover, a *Society for Asia and Pacific* was established, though this was called a one-man show by scholars of the Centre.

As far as teaching on East Asian studies is concerned, **Warsaw University** is the principal institution though focusing on philological disciplines. Three divisions are existing: Far East Studies, South-East Asian Studies and African Studies. As far as East Asia is concerned, there is the *Institute of Oriental Studies* headed by Prof. Krzysztof Byrski. We find three departments under it: the Japanese and Korean Department (the former one was established in 1919, the latter one in 1983). Its director is Prof. M. Melanowicz; the Department of Sinology (Sinology and Vietnamese Studies), headed by Prof. M. Künstler, and a small department for Mongolian language. The majority of teachers focus on language, literature, history and culture. Courses on contemporary economics, politics or society do not exist. Yet, this might change, as more and more students demand to establish courses on contemporary issues. Younger scholars are supporting this demand.

Warsaw University offers a three years B.A. and two years M.A. program "Japanese Studies" and/or "Chinese Studies", and a five years study program "Korean Studies". Vietnamese and Mongolian are offered as language courses only.

One periodical exists, "Japonica", a semi-annual journal and a book series "Takashima Memorial Series on Japanese Civilization". The Japanese department has a cooperation with two Japanese universities: Tokyo University and Doshisha University, Kyoto.

At the **Department of International Relations at Warsaw University** Prof. Edward Halizak's teaching includes the Asia-Pacific region. This department is a sub-division of the department of Political Science, the largest faculty at this university. 6,000 students are studying Political Science, 1,400 among them International Relations. Within five years a student may acquire a Master in international relations. This program was developed according to similar programs in the US, including area studies, for instance on Latin America, Africa and Asia-Pacific. The latter focuses on foreign policy and international relations in that area, e.g. foreign policy of Japan, China or India. Beginning next year a two-year's study program "Asian Studies" will be established. Prof. Halizak has written a textbook in Polish language on international relations of the Asia-Pacific region. He is covering 17 different jobs at various universities, primarily at private ones. His idea is to combine the language programs in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese of this university with international studies, thus establishing and developing a strong Centre of Asian Studies. His courses on the Asia-Pacific region are attended by more than 30 students. Undoubtly, he argues, the interest in this region is growing. Students are primarily and increasingly interested in issues as human rights, gender, the relationship mainland China/Taiwan as well as in politics and societies of East Asian countries. Currently, there are no cooperation programs with East Asian countries. Yet, frequently ambassadors of various East Asian countries are invited to lecture, and the embassies are sending scholars from their countries to offer some lectures. More developed are his contacts to the US. American scholars are giving advice in terms of curricula and provide scholarships. He personally has spent some time at the University of California at San Diego, doing research on regionalism in the Pacific area. According to him he is the only scholar in Poland working on international relations of Asia-Pacific, and Warsaw University is the only institution offering such courses. Prof Halizak claims that his university and the respective institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences are the centres of East Asian studies in Poland. At present, private universities were still too weak to establish East Asian Studies programs, as they are in the status nascendi yet.

Unfortunately, the university is not yet able to offer a library with publications on East Asia. Therefore the students have to go to the library of the former Polish Institute of International Affairs of the Academy. Albeit this institute does not exist any more the library which is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is still open. Recently there are new plans to revive the Institute of International Affairs.

The **Centre of East Asian Studies of the Institute of Political Studies** under the Polish Academy of Sciences was established in 1998. Its goal is to coordinate the East Asian

activities of that Centre and develop a study program related to contemporary political, social and cultural transformations in East Asia. The Centre was initiated by Prof. Krzysztof Gawlikowski who is currently its director. Five scholars are employed: Dr. Marcei Burdelski (focusing on Korea and international relations), Dr. Waldemar Dziak (North Korea and China), Dr. Michal Korzec (China, Korea, law and law system of China), Dr. Elzbieta Potocka (Japan and international relations) and Dr. Jan Rowinski (China). Moreover, there are three PhD. candidates, one of them working on Vietnam's foreign policy, another one on North Korea and a third one focusing on China. A dozen or so scholars from various research and academic institutions in Poland are associated to the Centre, some of them focusing on Southeast Asia. Major topics of interest and research are issues of democratization and formation of civil societies in East Asia, of establishing a law system in China, of human rights, international relations of East Asia, Polish relations to East Asia, classical Chinese strategic thought, etc.

This Centre is a research institute though all of its staff are concurrently involved in teaching, too. Prof. Gawlikowski teaches on Asia at several institutions: at the Institute of Sociology of Warsaw University, and at two private institutions: the College of Advanced Social Psychology, and the Collegium Civitas.

Among recent publications were a volume edited by Prof. Karin Tomala "China-Changes of the State and of the Society in the Period of Reforms, 1978-2000", Warsaw 2001 and "Russia and China: Two Models of Transformation", Torun 2000. The first volume included two contributions by Thomas Heberer of Duisburg University as well as contributions of other German scholars like Eberhard Sandschneider, Kay Möller, and Helmut Martin. Both volumes are in Polish. A book on the two Koreas is in print. The Centre also publishes working papers and policy papers.

Conferences in recent years comprised symposiums on China (1999) and Korea (2000), a third one on Vietnam is under preparation. In March 2001 a panel discussion on human rights in China was conducted, and in May 2001 an international conference on intercultural dialogue with Muslim countries.

In 1996, on the initiative of scholars related to the Centre, the *Asia-Pacific Society* was founded. Prof. Gawlikowski was elected its first President. The Society publishes the annual *Asia-Pacific, Society-Politics-Economy* (the first issue appeared in 1998). It contains research findings of the Institute's scholars (in Polish, with English abstracts) and is funded by the State's Committee for Scientific Research as well as by business men. The first issue (1998) focused on human rights, China and Japan; the second volume (1999) on Japan, China and Malaysia, the third volume (2000) on Korea. In

1997, on the initiative of that Society the *Polish Council of Asia and Pacific* was established composed of scholars, politicians and the heads of institutions related to Asia. Prof. Gawlikowski serves as its chairman. Both of these organizations are located at the Institute of Political Studies.

Major problems are the uncertainty of funding the Centre's research activities and its library. They expect cuts by 15 to 20 % this year. In November 2001 the director advised the Centre's staff to turn to other jobs, as it was running out of money and unable to pay the salaries of its staff. This situation makes it difficult to find and employ qualified younger scholars. One hope is that within Poland the consciousness will increase that the country has to participate in Asian studies and urgently needs policy advancement. Meanwhile, an annual meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that deals with issues of Polish-East Asian relations was established.

Warsaw School of Economics has a small program on Japan under the Chair of Economic Policy, Collegium of Management and Finance, Warsaw School of Economics. In principle this is based on the individual interest of Prof. Jan Kaja who offers a language program and some courses on Japanese economics.