

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA
NO. 28

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ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA
NO. 28

ASKON Publishers
Warsaw 2015

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Printed in Poland

This edition prepared, set and published by

Wydawnictwo Naukowe ASKON Sp. z o.o.
Stawki 3/1, 00-193 Warszawa
tel./fax: (+48) 22 635 99 37
www.askon.waw.pl
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PL ISSN 0860-6102
ISBN 978-83-7452-091-1

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus



Professor Roman Sławiński
(1932–2014)

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Introduction

Dear Readers!

We are presenting you yet another, already the 28th, issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* devoted to the countries and culture of Asia. Over the years of its activity the journal started to be issued in English and it has hosted on its pages many eminent experts on Asia, yet still it remained faithful to its formula which was proposed thirty years ago by Professor Roman Sławiński, the founder of the journal and its permanent editor in chief. This formula stipulated that the Asian cultures should present themselves in the journal and talk directly with their own voice. The idea was both: to include in the group of authors and editors of the magazine scientists who grew up in Asian cultures, as well as to publish materials based on or referring to the texts – philosophical, linguistic, historical, sociological, religious studies or political studies – which were created by the Asian culture. These could be proper names as an object of linguistic research, religious texts, political documents, ideological declarations, but also biographical materials, historiographical elaborations, experience of meeting other cultures and mutual acculturation phenomenon resulting from the relations.

Professor Roman Sławiński left us in November 2014. The more time passes from his death, the more I feel his absence and the more I realize how unique a character he was in the world of research on China. Professor Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, a prominent French scholar from Institut de France in Paris, who met Roman Sławiński in the times of his studies in Beijing, writes about that fact. Most striking is the variety of interests and multidimensionality of research on China which he ran. He was trained as a linguist, and he knew perfectly well not only the classical language, but also many dialects. There was even a time it was appreciated by Mao Zedong himself. Roman Sławiński was interpreting a conversation of the Chinese leader with the Polish state authorities. During the conversation Mao Zedong changed as usual from the classical language to the dialect of Hunan province, which was his place of origin. When he realized he was using the dialect, he noticed that it was not a slightest problem for the interpreter to understand his statements. Then he asked: „Who is that young man who understands the Hunan dialect?” It was known that many Chinese from the surroundings of the Chairman did not understand him when he spoke in the native dialect. It so happened, that Roman Sławiński knew the dialect.

He was interested not only in the language. History, politics, culture as well as China's economy were the subject of his interest and research. His views, opinions and insights on these matters were the inspiration for many researchers of China, some of which are the authors of the materials contained in this issue. Of the many research interests of Professor Sławiński in recent years at least two may be mentioned. First one became Confucianism, especially its latest colours and shades. Professor persistently sought and discovered them in the texts of Chinese scientists, government documents, archives and everyday citizens of China. In this regard he was a dedicated explorer and a keen observer. Even the slightest detail was important to him. Minor personnel changes on the bureaucratic ladder were important for the formation

of general conclusions. From my conversations with him, I got the impression that he was rather skeptical about the possibility of a revival of Confucianism under the supervision of the communist authorities. So he concluded after examining many texts of the so-called new wave of Confucianism in China. His works on the latest Chinese historiography constitute an invaluable contribution to global research on contemporary China. His second passion was the research on the minorities of China Southern. The field research among the peoples of Miao and Tujia that he ran and in which I had the opportunity to participate assumed getting to know the nature of change in the cultural identity of these minorities in the era of globalization and accelerated socio-economic transformation in China. These studies had not been completed, and we can only hope that one of the students of Professor will continue them in the near future.

The arrangement of contents offered to you in the 28th issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* refers to the research passions of Professor Sławiński. The first article, written by Stanisław Tokarski – Indologist and long-time associate of Professor Sławiński, concerns dialogue between the East and the West and the possibility of mutual understanding and agreement. Understanding another culture is also the ability to read the symbols contained in the letters and that aspect of the intercultural dialogue interested Professor Sławiński in particular. The question of so-called Asian values – presented in the articles written by Adam Jelonek, Adam Raszewski, Artur Kościański and Larisa Zabrowskaia – was very close to Professor Sławiński and he dealt with it for many years as part of his research on the so-called new Confucianism. The issue of Chinese migration in the world was also in the interests of Professor – mainly in the context of global economic and social phenomena. This part of the research on China is presented in the article on the Chinese migration to France by Nicolas Levi. The issue of Chinese language was obviously important for Professor Sławiński as a linguist and he always welcomed in the columns of *Acta* the authors writing about language and linguistic issues. This area of research is presented in the current issue in the article on Chinese names written by Irena Kałużyńska. On the other hand, the artistic part of the culture is referred to in the articles by Izabella Łabędzka, Lidia Kasarełło, Ewa Chmielowska, Fu-sheng Shih and Diana Wolańska. The first three of these articles relate to Taiwan, where Professor conducted research for many years which resulted among others in a monograph *History of Taiwan*. The further three articles penned by Waldemar Dziak, Iwona Grabowska-Lipińska and Anna Mrozek-Dumanowska refer to the political sphere. Political sphere is inextricably linked with the ideology which was also the case of China. Confucianism and the new Confucianism emerged and developed in the shadow of the emperors, presidents and chairmen of the Chinese Communist Party. Researching them without the analysis of the political scene was not possible. The part of articles is closed by two texts unrelated with China, but with the Middle East. Their authors – Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem and Marcin Styszyński present materials based on the Middle Eastern sources and thus relate to the traditions of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*. The issue is closed by the report from field research in southern China by Professor Sławiński and me. For me it was a unique opportunity to get to know at least a little piece of China – a unique one, because my guide was Professor Sławiński – such a great scholar and such a seasoned expert on Asia.

I would like to thank the authors – students, colleagues and friends – for participation in the preparation of the issue, and the Directorate of the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences for the possibility to dedicate the anniversary issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* to Professor Sławiński.

Jerzy Zdanowski

STANISŁAW TOKARSKI

Westernization and Easternization. At the Crossroads of Multicultural Dialogue

Remembering Professor Roman Sławiński as an outstanding scholar and a very experienced researcher, deeply understanding of the divergent aspects of intercultural encounters of Europe with China, I think about the visit of the Head of the Chinese Academy of Science in our Centre for Studies on non-European Countries (PAN Warsaw) more than a dozen years ago. He was followed by his official interpreter and guide carrying some recent Chinese publications. After a short introduction the eminent guest made a speech. He talked about the latest trends and fields of scholarly research in China. Then the time came for some questions and I asked about over two millennia of Chinese logistical experience with state control – extraordinary in the country with the biggest population in the world. It is very important for us, I continued, at the crucial moment of our access to the European Union and NATO, to learn how to deal with rapid change in such new perspectives. Of course, it was not mentioned that such a topic had been discreetly suggested by the Professor, for the reason of his position as the translator of the the speech having rendered him ‘outside’ the of debate.

The Chinese VIP liked my question so much that he even wrote my name in his notebook. And at the end of his visit to our centre he gave me not only most of his prospects but also a cute silver bell. “What does it mean?” I asked Professor Sławiński afterwards. “He liked your question so much – he explained – that he gave you the talisman against the evil ghosts”. There was some ambivalence, though, connected with his good intentions. He wanted to show that he wished you well, he continued, but as a leading member of the Communist Party of China he could not tell you much about the purpose of this very special gift, no matter how much he believed it could be helpful.

And for some more details Professor directed me to the famous Chinese bestseller *The Journey to the West* (the film version is entitled *Monkey*) dealing with the travel of the pious Buddhist Monk to a famous Tibet Monastery in order to get the original Buddhist Scriptures. In his travels he is guided by the Monkey bodyguard – a legendary Master of Kung Fu from the Sacred Mountains. As a Saint mainly experienced with meditation, he did not know how to deal with the crowds of malicious sorcerers, vicious devils and hungry vampires they encountered on their way, very soon the Monkey has become the main hero of the of the story. Written in the 19th Century somewhere in China it has been performed everywhere in the region of the Far East. Killing dragons, ghosts, and fighting the evil he met in their journey through the Himalaya Montains, the Monkey bodyguard

has been remembered in the Buddhist legendary world as the fabulous Chinese Hero, who successfully hit the road to Tibet.¹

Such an interpretation of an ambiguous context of Chinese beliefs highly resistant to change, where obvious superstitions meet ancient trends of rational praxiology and philosophy – bound with mystic horizons – and thoroughly linked with the prevailing trends of common life, lead me to study the background of mystic art in ancient China. Some traces of it can be found in my editorial review of “Confucianism” – the scholarly book written by Xinzhong Yao, in 2000 published by Cambridge University Press. After my review it was translated by the Jagiellonian Publishing House in Cracow in 2009.² Bearing this superstitious dimension in mind I also sent an essay for the collective work *Ex Oriente Lux* (Jubilee of Roman Sławiński, Kraków, ed. Roman Kapiszewski) entitled “The Symbol of Shaolin in the Chinese tradition”.³ Many other publications, not only mine, have been inspired, directly or indirectly, by Roman Sławiński, some of them printed in *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*, a journal for many years under his guidance and leadership. Our cooperation in the Council of this periodical was not the beginning of our friendship. We met long before this, even before the time when studying the Far East region was not so appreciated in our country, primarily because the two giants controlling Eastern Asia – China and Soviet Union – had stopped being “the best friends forever”.

In 1996 Samuel Huntington published his famous book *The Clash of Civilisations*, not even suspecting that the beginning of the third millennium would give this title the most dramatic of connotations. Around the same time I had issued the collective work *The Cultural Encounters, Conflicts and Dialogues*⁴ – with a very controversial cover: the map of world coloured green. Although such a design had not been consulted with me as the scientific editor, the drawing has sometimes been wrongly interpreted as the forecast of the total Islamisation of the West, especially in light of the M. Qadafi prediction of a demographic conquering of Europe or in the contexts of the recent waves of mass migrations from the region of the Near East.

Before the disastrous radical plans to attack the symbols of US domination in the modern world – the aim to destroy the World Trade Center, White House, and Pentagon – the whole story seemed to belong to the realms of science fiction and so was taken for granted on the first glance at the TV news. Analysed from Huntington’s perspective these unbelievable “UFO attacks” seen on the channels of CNN were afterwards perceived as the dramatic defence of values of the most harassed non-European civilisations characterised

¹ This widely known tale in 19th-century China has been recently published in Polish in two volumes. See Wu Cheng’en, *Wędrówka na Zachód* [Journey to West], Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1984 as the second volume and *Malpi bunt* [Monkey Riot], Warszawa, 1976 as the first one. Both were translated by professor Tadeusz Żbikowski from the Chinese Department of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw.

² Xinzhong Yao, *Konfucjanizm*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ. This book begins with a chronological account entitled ‘Confucianism in History’, followed by some precious information, ‘Confucianism East and West’.

³ Entitled in the Polish version ‘Tygrys i smok. Mit Szaolinu w tradycji i symbolice chińskiej’ in *Ex Oriente Lux*, Kraków. See also the essay of R. Sławiński, ‘Secret Society the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom’. The whole book has a special flavour. It begins with the passage of Zhuangzi ‘Radość doskonała’ [Perfect Happiness].

⁴ S. Tokarski (ed.), *Kraje pozaeuropejskie w konfrontacjach kultur. Spotkania, konflikty, dialogi* [Non-European Countries in Cultural Confrontations. Encounters, Conflicts, Dialogues], Łódź, 1996.

by demographic explosions and breaking the coherency of traditions. The smooth shift of military, economic, and political power to the West, argued Huntington, has been thoroughly linked with a naive belief and wishful thinking. So the understood notion of democratization, identified with Westernization, might have become a challenge for Islam and possibly for postcommunist China. In such a scenario the Westernization of some Eastern regions would have an unexpected happy end : the dramatic rapid Easternization of the Western World. Asked for some detailed explanation of such a perspective of a new world order, Professor Sławiński advised me to study the Olympic Games performance in Peking in order to find these trends expressed in the most spectacular symbols.

The crucial question, he argued, is the continuity of post-Confucian traditions in the Chinese post-communist world. In order to prove such trends he invited me to study the collective book of Huntington and Lawrence Hamilton (eds) *The Culture Matters. How the Values Shape Human Progress* (New York 2001). Appearing in this context was the cultural, economic and political expansion of China in the 21st century – which when considering the new order in the world – can be viewed as exemplary. Some traces of this lecture can be found in the essay “The Westernization of Chinese culture”⁵ written by Roman Sławiński for the collective book *Kultura pozaeuropejskie a globalizacja* (“Globalization and Non-European Countries”, ed. J. Zdanowski, Warszawa 2000).

Paradoxically, with the culture shock after the traumatic experience of the American tragedy still fresh in people’s minds, the Chinese presence in the Western hemisphere stopped to exist as a hidden truth. And the unquestionable domination of Western values in the world had begun to be perceived by some of the most renowned researchers as another myth of the modern world. The paradox of the theory of globalization gives the priority of Easternization before the unquestionable Westernization of the world order as a final goal. What is more, the dramatic defense of local values has become the present trend in recent decades, sometimes labelled in the glocalisation context, sometimes declared as jihad or the quest for regional autonomy.

In such circumstances, the question of cultural encounters, conflicts, and dialogues can be the crucial question for future civilisations. In such cases, the front of a defence of Western values as a strategy for our survival will also become important for Western culture. The dialogue can be maintained not necessarily by economic or military force. Founded in some cultural issues it should strongly increase tolerance and mutual understanding. Expressed by C. Geertz as “the possibility of discourse between people, difficult in this crowded world”,⁶ has some strong links with “the open attitude to the other”.⁷ Such an attitude makes it possible to study the mutual understanding not only in a rational dimension. In his book *The Intrareligious dialogue* (New York 1978) Raymondo Panikkar distinguishes the notion of ‘dialectic dialogue’ from ‘dialogic dialogue’, the sphere of the latter notion recently prevailing and situating mainly in intercultural religious areas.

“Beware the people getting their knowledge from one source” wrote A.C. Benjamin in his book *Tolerance, its Foundations, Theory and Practice*.⁸ Sławiński analysed this open attitude in some classic Chinese contexts, explaining a temporary lack of tolerance with

⁵ Polish title: ‘Westernizacja chińskiej kultury – blaski i cienie’.

⁶ In the collective book *Komunikacja międzykulturowa* [Intracultural Communication], ed. by L. Korporowicz, Warszawa, 1995, p. 137.

⁷ T. Pilch, ‘Interview with B. Wizimirska’, *UNESCO i MY*, No. 3, 1995.

⁸ London 1963, p. 5.

language barriers in China – in his essay *Chinese people and the others*.⁹ Such ideas have also been promoted in Poland more widespread, together with the expanding activities of the Confucian Society. The sound foundations for its expansion have been recently laid in Cracow. Although the institutional structure has been sponsored by the Chinese People's Republic, the role of Professor Roman Sławiński as the pioneer of such activities in academic circles cannot be denied.

The reflection on “the other” has always been connected with mass migrations. Our attitudes towards the recently increased wanderings of the refugees from the areas of civil wars in Asia, the phenomenon witnessed long ago by Roman Sławinski during his studies in China, has developed into an unfolding event that has captured his latest interest. Generally, these issues have been carefully studied in works edited year by year by professor Jan Zamoyski, for many years the Director of IH PAN, and the results have been published year by year in the periodical of the Institute entitled *Migrations*. Situated in Warsaw on the Old Market Square, the aforementioned Institut of Polish Academy of Sciences in the late 1990s organised several conferences oriented on past and present demographic change, not necessarily connected with the ancient history of the rapidly expanding Moghul Empire and Arabic Caliphate, the European Crusades to the Holy Land, or the encounters in the era of extensive European colonization. The interest of these gatherings of scholars did not belong mainly to the ancient traditions, but emphasized the topics belonging to the modern ages, especially connected with a new world order and the phenomenon of decolonisation. Among the scholarly reflections of the shocking experiences of mass migrations in the 20th Century was the traumatic remembrance at the beginning of India's Independence: the mass exodus of Islam believers to the recently created Pakistan, and the mass migration of Hindu believers to the Indian Republic. Mixed up with the third direction, the journey to the West, as Mahatma Gandhi preached, where God revealed himself as he promised of work and bread, “The Indian Holocaust”, has been the milestone for national integration since the dawn of Indian Independence. Its experience has been laid as a backdrop for the contemporary myth of the Promised Land situated in the Shining Future of India.

In the context of China, as Roman Sławiński taught, the mass migrations perceived in shocking the West with the enigmatic landscapes of Cultural Revolution, at first were preceded by the Long March of Mao and then – the Exodus for Taiwan. Its history, modern culture and the search for a new identity were thoroughly described by Roman Sławiński in his final books. The shortest outline was realized in his essay “Migracje na Tajwan a tożsamość kulturowa Tajwańczyków” published in the collective work *Globalizacja a tożsamość* (ed. J. Zdanowski, Warszawa 2002). He continued his reflection in his article ‘The Cultural Identity of the Taiwanese People in the Globalisation Era’ (*Hemispheres* 2002). The Professor maintained that in China was the ‘Centre of the World’ and its mythology has never been identified with in the West. The Exodus of Chinese pre-communist elites to Taiwan created several dilemmas for the reconstruction of the Chinese *universum* in the new re-orientation of time and space. The key for the traditional structure, Chinese symbols constructing the milestones for identity – the archives of ancient libraries, the documents of scholarly studies – all of this has been taken over during the Exodus to the new Promised Land of non-communist elites situated in the periphery of the Asian

⁹ The Polish title ‘Chińczycy i inni’ [Chinese People and the Others] in the collective work *Między konfrontacją a tolerancją* [Between Confrontation and Tolerance], A. Mrozek (ed.), Warsaw: PAN, 1995.

continent and marginalised politically in continental China during the rules of Mao, the new leader in the traditional geographic landscape. For the political refugees the Island situated somewhere on the Chinese sea meant the 'real China', especially after the events of the Cultural Revolution aimed at the total destruction of the foundations of old values.

Such orientations, maintained Roman Sławiński, did not have the sound background – both for Taiwan and for continental China. The Chinese People's Republic had to cope for two decades with the problems of a communist version of Westernisation grounded in Marxism, and widely promoted by the Soviet Union in Asia. On the other hand, the extensive help by the US for the elites of Taiwanese refugees for subsequent generations, developing the framework of a rapid Westernization with an American background – produced the orientation of Taiwanese youth educated in America, to welcome the American lifestyle. What is more, the mosaic of ethnic minorities after the wartime Japanese occupation of the Pacific islands, was the source of the third, multicultural trend in the search of the new identity for Taiwan. Adding the last but not least dimension to this very complicated demographic landscape, citing Roman Sławiński, we cannot forget about some intensive Taiwanese scholarly research about the native Aborigines,¹⁰ together with studies of the multicultural ethnic landscape of the Island building barriers of different identity thresholds for Chinese claims on Taiwanese territory.

Such a situation changed with the end of Cold War, when the specialised experts became aware of the gradual expansion of Taiwanese capital to continental China, whether directly or indirectly. At the same time, at the end of the Cultural Revolution and its consequences, the world witnessed a renaissance of extensive studies on Chinese tradition, not only popular in some Western centres often headed by renowned, exiled Chinese scholars, but also among those residing in post-communist China and in other post-communist countries. Poland has not been absent in such research. As an example, Roman Sławiński cited the history of Chinese migrations, reconstructed within the framework of the Polish Academy of Science by German born Karin Tomala; extensive research on the Chinese political economy done by Piotr Ostaszewski, the vice-chancellor of SGH; the philosophical studies of T. Zbikowski; research on Chinese literature by Mieczysław Kunstler at Warsaw University, and scholarly work on Chinese theatre done by Lidia Kasarełło at Warsaw and Jagiellonian Universities.

The cross-cultural encounters of recent decades exemplified tolerance, and are present in our conscience in many ways as a natural outcome of the 'global village' era. In spite of building walls in Europe we witness nowadays the opening of Europe, questioned within the framework of the controversial issues connected with the mass migrations of the refugees coming from the Near East to the European Union. Europe is destroying walls and frontiers but the danger of building new boundaries still exists. This topic has been present in some Polish publications even before the recent issues raised concerns over European Union security. In the collective book published in Kraków by T. Paleczny (ed.), *Dialog na pograniczach kultur i cywilizacji* [Dialog at the Frontiers of Civilizations and Cultures]¹¹ the debate on shifting historical group stereotypes was not necessarily attributed to some political clashes or cultural tourism. To serve as a reminder of the ancient journeys of the Europeans the authors would like to cite the old saying: "Sailing is necessity, life is

¹⁰ See R. Sławiński, *History of Taiwan* and also the essay 'The Aborigines of Taiwan' written by Ch'ang-hue Juan in a Chinese language version, and published in the collective memorial book *Ex Oriente Lux* mentioned above.

¹¹ Ibidem.

not” (*Navigare necesse est, vivere non est necesse*). Another search for identity has been exemplified by several writers of the modern age. Such was the case of some of the bestsellers of Herman Hesse, *Journey to the East*, Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*, E.M. Forster, *Passage to India*, and John Blofeld, *My Journey to the Mystic China*, C.G. Jung essays *Journey to East*. For Roman Sławiński it meant a compulsion to constantly visit the Far East and return to old research. As a result he chose Poland to spend the autumn of his years, but still travelled regularly with lectures alternating between Warsaw and Cracow, a factor which kept him open minded to new ideas. But the centre of his research was always China and the publication closest to his heart seemed to be the periodical *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*.

Orientalist scholar Heinrich Zimmer wrote a story about a poor Rabbi from Cracow who was repeatedly dreaming about some treasure buried under a gate in Prague. Then one day he decided to go to a Royal Castle far away in the capital of a neighbouring country. As he had walked many days, the journey was very tiresome and the result was disappointing. Because the main gate to Prague was guarded day and night, he has attracted the attention of a captain. When he narrated his dream to the guard, the officer burst out with laughter. “Poor man”, he said, “who believes in dreams today? You have worn your old shoes only to walk a long way from Cracow? I heard a voice in a dream that the treasure has been hidden in the house of Rabbi Eisik, the son of Jekel from Cracow”. The Rabbi did not say a word. He returned home and found the gold buried in the corner behind the stove.¹² Commenting on this passage, Professor Sławiński emphasised the necessity of travel for our scientific self-realisation. But the real treasure is not very far away. There is no need to migrate to a distant land for ever. But the journey matters, with two conditions to fulfil. You have to meet a stranger from a different land, and a believer in a different God.

The quest for new identity has been discussed recently in several inter-disciplinary debates. Reflecting on multicultural encounters in the modern world, the authors of a book recently published in Cracow (M. Banaś et al, eds, *Kulturowe i społeczne wyzwania współczesności*, Kraków: Wyd. UJ, 2010), draw from the perspective of cross-cultural co-existence in the context of global defiance. Secularised cultural tourism and economic migration, they maintain, have become the new ‘backbone’, a kind of travel to the Promised Land situated in different times and places. A journey becomes a form of regeneration of physical shape but also a renovation of spiritual force. It becomes the important element of the modern pattern of life. Because of its dynamic growth, cultural tourism becomes an important component of the process of modernisation. For several decades it has been combined with the latest modern technology. In this context, the Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai talks about “the neighbourhood in the global net”.¹³ Even the tribal dwellers in remote areas of India now have mobiles phones, and satellite communication with the whole world became possible even for the impoverished. For this reason, the marginalised classes are no longer seen as provincial. Every conflict on a local scale, from its inception, becomes a part of cybernetic space, backed up or controlled by an informatic diaspora (S. Tokarski, *The Frontiers of Modernity in Anthropological Reserches on India*, Kraków: Wyd. UJ, 2010).

Such intercontinental encounters were foretold long ago by some serious scholars. Half a century ago the historian of religion Mircea Eliade, maintained that Japan became more

¹² See M. Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, London: Harper and Row, 1960.

¹³ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

‘Western’ than the whole of the westernised world in the dimension of electronics and quality control. So was India in the realm of modern philosophy, and China in the organisation of labour. Such unquestioned priority due to the ‘modernity of tradition’¹⁴ puts the Old World in danger. To make these kind of views more spectacular, Rudolph Otto from the University of Chicago entitled his handbook of the political economy of India (issued in 1986) *In the Pursuit of Lakshmi*, appealing to the Goddess of wealth and prosperity in Hindu religion.

And in doing so, he was by no means alone. Cross-cultural encounters in economic terms are an important topic for some native scholars of Asia. In *Modernity at Large*, the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai organised a quest for the imperial relict of the British rule in the Indian Republic, after independence and its developing democratic system being a sign of the times in the second part of the 20th Century. He found more of them in India than in Great Britain. For many the most spectacular import from Britain, even considering the omnipresence now of cricket in the whole area of The Indian Subcontinent, would be the nostalgia surrounding the ‘fabulous’ British Raj, epitomized in the works of Kipling, Conrad, and other English writers highly estimated in the literary world.

The prognostics of the spectacular modernising of Asia in many different fields have been predicted long ago. “Western culture – wrote Mircea Eliade in *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* – will be in danger of decline into a sterilizing provincialism, if it despises or neglects the dialogue with other cultures. In fact the West is forced [one might say: condemned] into this encounter and confrontation with the cultural values of the ‘other’. Fortunately – he adds – certain discoveries of this century, deep psychology, several revivals of religion, the discoveries of surrealism by modern paintings, the research of ethnology and anthropology – have prepared the ground for such reopening to the East. As a result, the ground for mutual understanding has been prepared. And the ‘exotic strangeness’ of non-Western civilisations did not seem inferior today even to those less acquainted with such ‘otherness’, in particular Western politicians and economists”.

As foretold by Mircea Eliade long ago, the new perspective of cross-cultural encounters created an unpredicted situation. Modern man of the West, he argued, is no longer the only authority to compare the traditions of different civilisations. Western values are not exemplary any more, from now on they have been carefully studied, evaluated and compared to non-European worlds.¹⁵

Such a task has been taken and carefully studied by several outstanding scholars. Aurelie Chone published her synthetic outcome of research in her book *Transformation de savoir sur L'Orient dans l'espace germanophone* (Strassburg: University Press, 2009). William Halbfass from Basel University has made the grand synthesis of Indian and European philosophies, comparing them from the point of view of an Asian background in the book *India and Europe. On the Possibility of Mutual Understanding* (Polish translation Warsaw 2005, Dialogue Publ. House). Professor Roman Ślawiński made such comparison on the grounds of Chinese modern traditions. As the editor of the book *Confucianism and its Modern Interpretations* (Warszawa: PAN, 2013) he maintained that Confucianist writings and perceptions created a sound background for the identity and integration of Chinese people, who had been divided politically, geographically and culturally, and living in

¹⁴ The concept used by Rudolph Otto in his book entitled *Modernity of Tradition*, Chicago: Chicago University Press 1973.

¹⁵ M. Eliade, *The Quest*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. 8.

different societies and socio-political systems such as the Chinese People's Republic, the Republic of Taiwan, the United States of America, Western Europe and Australia, places where Confucian heritage was highly if not equally estimated.

Such ideas and strong beliefs may have been derived from his books edited earlier, especially from the collective work entitled *The Modern History of China* (Kraków, 2006), comparing the views of outstanding Asian scholars from the three continents (Ch'ao-jan Wang, Zhang Haipeng, Li Chang, Russian researcher Vitaly Kozyriew, German born Karin Tomala, and well-known in Poland Teresa Halik and Lidia Kasareńko). He also situated the rapid developments of Chinese studies in a very wide perspective as an important part of the new cultural fashions connected with the trend of the "Pacific shift", conditioned with the realities of the Second World War, the American occupation of Japan and the consequences of the end of the Cold War.

In many important academic studies of Western origin contemporary China became the "Centre of World". This category, as Professor Sławiński argued, has always been proclaimed as the background for the classic, mainly Confucianist orientation. But in the worldview of ancient Chinese scholars, he continued, the notion of an Asia was in fact more a literary and psychological construct than a geographical one. For this reason it provided the framework of identification for huge groups of humans, although it might be perceived as a vague category for many foreigners visiting China in ancient and modern times. But it served in some intuitive way, with all their connotations, for the search of associations with the deepest social emotions and the quest of common values, drawing the boundary between 'we' and 'them' in the Chinese search for identity.

For the same reason Roman Sławiński opposing the trend for formal divisions of Chinese people according to geographical regions with the socio-political conditionings of the world order visibly collapsing at the beginning of the third millennium – also strictly opposed the superficial 'Westernization', of the myths of civilisation, which in reality have been overwhelmed by the Chinese omnipresence the old bureaucratic spirit, where the notion of state is uncontested and organisation wins over competition.

Another dimension of such trends seem to be 'the cheap Easternisation' of the spheres believed to be 'Asian imports', with the spirit of Dao contesting a high degree of predominantly totalitarian societies on the roads to unquestionable freedom. It explains, as shown by Roman Sławiński, the spectacular examples and editorial success of books such as *The Tao of Physic* written by Frijof Capra (10 editions), *The Dancing with Wu Li Masters. An Overview of the New Physics* published by Gary Zukav, *The Tao of Psychology* by Jean Shinoda Bolen, (see also in Poland *Tao Kubusia Puchatka* (Tao of Winnie-the-Pooh), not excluding the extensive political, economic and cultural studies of China in the West. The creation of common platforms of cross-cultural dialogue as a result of the Westernization or Easternization of many fields, has been an important condition in the promotion of many topics of scholarly work.

Professor Sławiński has inspired not only authentic research on Chinese economic and political success. I remember our debates about the true meaning of the Western expansion of Asian martial arts being an important part of my student life and character formation. He pointed out the priority of the Chinese road to the West in this respect, long before the Western explosion of the spectacular myth that was Bruce Lee, an iconic Hollywood actor. Prior to the unquestionable explosion of Chinese 'Easterns' (term opposite to Westerns) dealing with the martial arts of Wu Shu, he had shown the preparatory organic work done by the

count of Jigoro Kano, who became the first Asian member of the World Olympic Committee and the outstanding spokesman of Japanese pedagogy for many centuries and applied in samurai schools (Ryu). The martial arts phenomenon was based on such philosophical texts as the *Book of Five Rings*, written by the legendary master of the sword Miyamoto Musashi, the unbeatable warrior and uncontested painter and poet. Such legendary personalities, maintained Professor Sławiński, together with their renaissance in the world in modern film (see the creations of Toshiro Mifune in Kurosawa movies) enveloped the West through the imaginary Silk Road. To find other such trails of modern myths (see Andrew L. March, *The Idea of China. Myth and Theory in Geographical Thought*, London 1974) is surely just a question of time. The New Millennium has seen the pursuit of the quest for building bridges of mutual understanding. For this reason the promotion of Confucius Societies in Europe should be reflected as a very important necessity.

Examples of mutual cooperation of Eastern and Western scholars in such contexts are fairly limited in the Polish dimension. Professor Roman Sławiński was among the pioneers. We should also remember the Japanese grants for professor Ewa Pałasz Rutkowska (Director of Japanese Department of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw), for the collective work *In Search of Polish Graves in Japan* (Warszawa 2010) issued in three language versions: Polish, Japanese, and English, with the extensive co-operation and help by the Polish Ministry of Culture, the Department of Cultural Heritage, and the collaboration of highly specialised Japanese scholars such as Matsumoto Teruo and co-editor Inaba Chiharu. The book has been recognized by Western and Eastern researchers, starting from scholars dealing with accounts of missionaries in the Far East region and ending with the Gatherings of Japanese Combatants Union.

Since becoming widely recognized in Asia, the outcome of these works has been compared to the role of Chopin's music bridging the gap between Japan and Poland. In the book *Chopin gra w duszy japońskiej* (Lech Niekrasz ed. Chopin Echoes in Japanese Soul, Warszawa 2010, Rytm, 2010), the Japanese Ambassador to Poland, Yuichi Sakamoto, regarded the International Piano Tournament in Warsaw as a key to the Japanese soul. It is a pity that such a "bridge" for mutual understanding has not been used for the promotion of similiar research by a group of Polish scholars headed by Jerzy Skowronek (later the Director of Polish Archives whom I met at the end of the 80s in Paris on my French grant at the CRNS in Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales), who for many years compiled documentary work on Polish graves in France. We walked through Parisien boulevards to taste the air of street painting reflected in the imaginary patterns *sur la Seine*. Maybe for these reasons Professor Roman Sławiński also painted landscapes in the Eastern manner, trying to find the key to understanding the Chinese soul.

I remember our walks along the Cracow walls and in the Warsaw passage from the Polish Academy of Science to the University, as a very precious time when the silence had many flavours and words mattered. The true debates took place during our travels in express trains to the Jagiellonian *Alma Mater*. We often talked about the changing relations of India and China. It happens that some of the outcomes of these long journeys waited for better times to be published, and some can be found in *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*, headed by Professor Sławiński and supported by my presence on the Advisory Council. He strongly emphasized his view of totally misunderstood Chinese interpretations of 'recent happenings' published in native newspapers as a Chinese language version, which differed greatly from official Chinese publications in Western languages and designed for Western readers. To bridge

the gap caused by such polarisation, he compared the same news with entirely different explanations in divergent language versions, with the Chinese press, published together in post-communist China under the supervision of the same censorship. It is worth finding the reminiscences of such lines of arguments in his article, 'Rola jednostki w społeczeństwie konfucjańskim' [The Role of the Individual in Confucian Society], written for the collective book *Uniwersalizm praw człowieka* (Universalism of Human Rights), Warsaw: PAN, 1998) and sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation. My essay about Gandhism included there can be used as an explanation of the half-forgotten background of the Indian struggle, and the perspective for human rights at the dawn of Indian Independence, rarely questioned nowadays in an India pre-occupied in the quest for economic power.

Commemorating the inspiration of Professor Sławiński, I cannot hide the fact that during my school years we were close neighbours. After the completion of the Palace of Culture construction, the Rector of the University together with forty barracks of students were given the same number of small houses, the "Centre of Friendship" (Osiedle Przyjaźń), constructed for several years by Russian builders living in Poland at the end of the 1950s. Fairly soon it became a kind of unique University Campus, for many years surrounded by beautiful gardens. Situated on the outskirts of Wola, in the 1950s they were designed for Russian engineers and in the 1960s for some outstanding but homeless academic researchers. For this reason my father Jan Tokarski, professor of Warsaw University in linguistic issues, and Roman Sławiński, an Orientalist specializing in Chinese issues could stand in their gardens close to a very low wooden fence, and chat about the possibilities of publishing a Polish-Chinese dictionary. As the Polish champion of judo I was highly estimated by some Asian residents of our district, mistakenly taken for Master of Kung fu/Wu Shu. Summertime – as the honorary member of Chinese team – I often played basketball with Chinese students attending many Polish universities, living temporarily on holidays in empty barracks, and every afternoon seriously performing their sporting activities considered as a "political duty". Maybe the best outcome of these *rencontres* was my orientation and gravitation towards Asian studies. I chose, as the first faculty of my protracted lifetime studies, the Oriental Department. For this reason, I sometimes return there full of nostalgia. The "Centre of Friendship" is still alive, the wooden houses of Siberian origin and Scandinavian design still look well. But my Father and Roman Sławiński have gone.

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