

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Chinese Studies in Poland: History and Current Perspectives

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Abstract

The earliest pieces of knowledge and research on China in Poland reflected the development of Sinological studies in Western Europe. Being located on the sidelines of trade routes through which Eastern ideas and goods reached Western Europe, Poles used to get their information about China mostly from intermediaries: medieval travelers, merchants, and envoys, and since the sixteenth century, letters, writings, and books by Jesuit missionaries. The Poles contributed the very first comprehensive description of Chinese flora, and were important in spreading mathematical knowledge among Chinese scientists. A Pole established *Monumenta Serica*, still published today, and another Pole applied formal logic to the research of Chinese classical texts for the very first time. Despite all that, regular Sinological research in Poland did not take off until the twentieth century, and even then it was interrupted by political upheaval in Poland and by researchers' fight either for freedom or with ideology.

Keywords: Polish Sinology; Chinese studies in Poland; Michał Boym; Witold Jabłoński; Janusz Chmielewski

Introduction

The earliest pieces of knowledge and research on China in Poland reflected the development of Sinological studies in Western Europe. Located on the sidelines of trade routes through which Eastern ideas and goods reached Western Europe, Poles got their information about China mostly from intermediaries. At first, these were outdated and fantastic ancient sources, then the accounts of medieval travelers, merchants, and envoys, and since the sixteenth century, letters, writings, and books by Jesuit missionaries. The seventeenth-century accounts by some Polish missionaries also greatly contributed to the development of European knowledge about China; however, as their Polishness was established only centuries later this was not counted as a part in the development of Sinological studies in Poland until much later. Until the 1930s, knowledge of China in Poland was restricted mainly to a few enthusiasts and self-taught amateurs. At that time most publications on China or translations of Chinese literature were works composed in Western Europe then translated into Polish. In 1933 the Chair of Sinology was established at the University of Warsaw. Sinological research and further

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development were stopped by the outbreak of the World War II, when teaching was under the control of the Nazi occupation. Sinology was quickly restored after the war. A period of vibrant development in the 1950s and 1960s followed close political relations between the two countries, after the PRC was proclaimed. As the Cultural Revolution broke out in the mid-1960s and contacts came almost to a stop for a number of years, Polish Sinology became a niche discipline, pursued by few active scholars. It was only at the beginning of the twenty-first century that, due to the political transformation in Poland and changes in world politics, new academic departments began to be established throughout Polish universities, and the number of scholars professionally involved in Chinese studies, as well as students specializing in Chinese language, grew rapidly. Since the sources of information about China, the people connected to China, and the political relationship between Poland and China all had an immense influence on the timing and scale of development of Sinological studies in Poland, this article devotes its main parts to those three subjects. The term Polish Sinology is understood here as Sinological scholarship by Poles well-read in Chinese language, history, and culture who identified themselves as Polish, wherever they lived and whatever language they wrote in. Due to the growing influence of China in the world, the contemporary research in political and economic studies on China by Polish scholars with a solid Sinological background is also mentioned, even though it has not been traditionally considered as part of Sinological scholarship in Poland.

Before Sinology: China in Poland

The first information about China in Poland dates back to the thirteenth century and is associated with papal missions and the dispatches of European rulers to the court of the great Mongolian Khan.¹ Benedict the Pole, a monk from the Franciscan Order in Wrocław, took part in a mission that set off in the autumn of 1245. The mission reached Mongol headquarters and witnessed the installation of the Great Khan (*qaghan*) Guyug on the throne in August 1246, a fact described in the Latin work *Libellus historicus Ioannis de Plano Carpini, qui missus est Legatus ad. Tartaros anno Domini 1246. ab Innocentio quarto Pontifice maximo* by John of Plano Carpini.² The account was known in Poland as a still-unfinished description of the journey copied on the return trip of the envoy through Poland. Two other copies of the work are known to date from the fourteenth century.³ The first mention of China (at that time called Kataj) by Polish authors, appear in the geographical treatises of the sixteenth century, for example the *Kronika wszytkiego świata* (Chronicle of all the world) by Marcin Bielski, published in 1551 in Kraków. These books were mainly transcribed from Marco Polo and did not differ from reports of merchants and missionaries published in Western Europe contributing to the spread of information about China in Poland. In a medical work on syphilis by the eminent Polish physician Wojciech Oczko (1537–1599), amid

¹Monika Kwietniewska, “Wiedza o Chinach w polskim Oświeceniu: Krótkie wprowadzenie” [Knowledge of China in the Polish Enlightenment: A short introduction], in *Początki wiedzy o Chinach w Polsce* [The beginnings of knowledge about China in Poland], edited by Irena Kadulska and Józef Włodarski (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2008), 37–49.

²*The Texts and Versions of John de Plano Carpini and William de Rubruquis as Printed for the First Time by Hakluyt in 1598 Together with Some Shorter Pieces*, edited by Charles R. Beazley (London: Charles Raymond, 1903), 74–106.

³Bolesław Olszewicz, “Stosunki naukowe polsko–chińskie w przeszłości” [Polish–Chinese academic relations in the past], *Nauka Polska* 4 (1953), 95.

information on quinine as a cure for this venereal disease, the term *China* was mentioned for the first time, along with a handful of general and positive information about the country.⁴

Poland shared in the popularity of China in Europe in the seventeenth century,⁵ generated by the accounts on Chinese geography, history, politics, and society, as well as literary translations coming from the Jesuits established in Macao. The Chinese classics, translated by Chinese-speaking missionaries into European languages, were subsequently re-translated into Polish. Thanks to the fascination with the Orient in Western Europe, information about China began to appear in Polish compendia of knowledge, encyclopedias, dramas, and literature. The early seventeenth century saw the first translations into Polish of works on China. Two reports on the activities of Jesuit missions in China were published in Kraków: *Nowiny albo dziecie dwyletnie z Iaponu y z Chiny, Krain Pogańskich, Nowego Świata*, by Juan Rodriguez and Mateo Ricci,⁶ in 1611, and *Nowiny, albo dziecie dwuletnie chineńskie*, by Nicolas Trigault,⁷ in 1616. The chapter "On the Secular State of the Chinese," included in the latter of these, includes laudatory descriptions of the elements of the political system of the empire, such as the absence of noble strata or access to posts through education rather than birth, which seemed particularly appealing to the Poles ruled by the overinfluential generations of aristocracy who inherited their governmental posts.⁸ The translator from Italian into Polish, priest Szymon Wysocki (1542–1622), must have been interested in the subject of the translated works, since in the preface to the first work he steers readers to Trigault's latest book *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*. However, the most widely read work in Poland containing information on China of the period was *Relatiae powszechnae albo nowiny pospolite*, translated from the Italian by Jan Botero Benesius.⁹ A kind of comprehensive description of the world, in the parts dedicated to China this book is an uncritical compilation providing no new information. Its importance lay in its popularity. It should also be noted that apart from translations into Polish, books on China in Latin published in other countries were also accessible and popular among the educated and clergy.

⁴Wojciech Oczko, *Przymiot* [Great pox] (Kraków: Drukarnia Łazarzowa, 1581), 125–26.

⁵Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 25–56.

⁶Full title *Nowiny abo dziecie dwuletnie z Iaponu y z Chiny, krain Pogańskich, Nowego Świata. Przez list X. Jana Rodriquesa, y X. Mattheusza Ricciego Societatis Iesu Roku Państkiego 1606 y 1607 do Przewilebnego Ojca Claudiusa Aquaviva, tegoż zakonu Generała opisane; a teraz z włoskiego na polskie przez X. Symona Wysockiego tegoż wezwania przetłumaczone* [News or two years from Japan and China, the Pagan lands of the New World. By letter of X. John Rodrigues, and X. Mattheus Riccy Societatis Iesu in the Year of Our Lord 1606 y 1607 to the Reverend Father Cladius Aquaviva, General of the same Order, described, and now from Italian into Polish by X. Symon Wysocki translated] (Kraków: Drukarnia Łazarzowa, 1611).

⁷*Nowiny abo Dziecie dwuletnie chinenskie przez list x. Mikołaja Trigawta Societatis Iesu roku Państk[iego] 1610 y 1611 do ... ojca Claudiusa Aquaviva, tegoż zakonu generała opisane, a teraz z włoskiego na polskie przez x. Szymona Wysockiego tegoż też wezwania przetłumaczone* [News or Two Years of China by letter of x. Nicholas Trigawt Societatis Iesu in the year of our Lord 1610 and 1611 to ... father Cladius Aquaviva, general of the same order, described, and now from Italian to Polish by x. Szymon Wysocki translated] (Kraków: Drukarnia Łazarzowa, 1616).

⁸Leszek Cyrzyk, "Chiny w piśmiennictwie polskim do końca XVII w." [China in Polish writing until the end of the seventeenth century], *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 2 (1963), 116.

⁹Jan Boter Benesius (Giovanni Botero Benese), *Relatiae powszechnae albo nowiny pospolite* [Common relations or common news] (Kraków: Drukarnia Mikołaja Loba, 1609).

Polish Jesuits often applied for missionary work in China;¹⁰ but they rarely received the consent of their superiors,¹¹ and in the seventeenth-century Jesuit registers there are only four names of Poles sent to China: Andrzej Rudomino (1595–1631), Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki (1610–1656), Jan Ignacy Lewicki (1608–1646)¹² and Michał Piotr Boym (1612–1659). Andrzej Rudomino entered the Jesuit order in 1618, set out for China via Goa in the fall of 1624, and arrived in Macao in 1625, where he began to learn Chinese. Quite soon he left for Hangzhou to continue his studies. In China he met the Jesuit Giulio Aleni (1582–1649) with whom he co-authored *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄 (A diary of oral admonitions), a scholarly dialogue between missionaries and Chinese Confucian converts. In 1630 the superiors sent the ailing Rudomino to Fuzhou to recover, but in mid-1631 the Jesuit died and was buried at a now unknown location there.¹³ Another Polish Jesuit who went to China as a missionary was Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki.¹⁴ Coming from a rich and influential family, the well-educated Smogulecki quit his promising political career to join the Order in 1636. He successfully applied for a mission trip, and in 1646 he arrived in China, where he worked prolifically in Nanjing, Fujian, Manchuria, and Guangdong. Smogulecki appears in the accounts of other Jesuits; it is known that he was fluent in Chinese, that he collaborated with Giulio Aleni and Adam Schall, taught mathematics and astronomy to the Chinese, and was characterized by great missionary zeal.¹⁵ He tutored the mathematician Xue Fengzuo 薛鳳祚 (1640–1680), who later published two astronomical works under the name of his Polish teacher.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, the most famous Polish Jesuit who spent time on mission in China was Michał Boym, considered today to be one of the pioneers of European Sinology. Boym's works cover Chinese science, philosophy, nature, geography, and medicine, as well as language and customs. Coming from a family of merchants, Boym entered the order in 1631 and after many years was finally allowed to go on a mission to

¹⁰An extensive study devoted to letters with requests to send Polish Jesuits on mission has been written by Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, “*Indipetae Polonae*—kołatanie do drzwi misji chińskiej” (“[“Indipetae Polonae”—knocking on the door of the Chinese mission]” [Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2005]).

¹¹Monika Miazek-Męczyńska has written extensively about the difficulties of Polish Jesuits such as Boym or Smogulecki with gaining permission to travel to China in “Michał Piotr Boym i Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki—dwie jezuickie drogi do Państwa Środka” [Michał Piotr Boym and Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki—two Jesuit ways to the Middle Kingdom], *Nurt SVD* 2 (2014), 34–45.

¹²Jan Lewicki is always mentioned as a missionary sent to China, but the very few pieces of information about his stay in Macao and his death in 1646 during his journey to Tonkin indicate that he was prepared for a mission in Vietnam, not in China; see Duc Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku* [Polish missionaries in the Far East in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2006), 99–103.

¹³For detailed information on the life and activities of Andrew Rudomino, see Jan Konior SJ, *Apostoł Serca Jezusowego w Chinach. Andrzej Rudomina SJ (1595–1631)* [Apostle of the Heart of Jesus in China: Andrew Rudomina SJ (1595–1631)] (Górna Grupa: Wydawnictwo Verbinum, 2014).

¹⁴Contemporary studies of Smogulecki's biography are largely based on the article by E. Kosibowicz, “*Zapomniany misjonarz polski ks. Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki T.J., misjonarz w Chinach w XVII wieku*” [Forgotten Polish missionary Rev. Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki T.J., a missionary in China in the seventeenth century], *Przegląd Powszechny* 46.181 (1929), 148–72; reprinted in Felix Alfred Plattner, *Gdy Europa szukala Azji* [Jesuiten zur See. Der Weg nach Asien], translated by Mieczysław Bednarz and Antoni Starzeński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1975), 324–45.

¹⁵Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku*, 73–81.

¹⁶Shi Yunli, “Nikolaus Smogulecki and Xue Fengzuo's True Principles of the Pacing of the Heaven: Its Production, Publication, and Reception,” *East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine* 27 (2008), 62–124.

China in 1643. Only in 1650 was Boym sent to the court of the Ming Emperor Yongli (1623–1662) who was protecting himself from the Manchus in the south of China. At the end of 1650, Boym was sent on a mission back to Europe to ask for help against the Qing. When the mission reached Goa, the Portuguese authorities did not allow the delegation to continue by sea, and Boym set off for Europe by land, reaching Smyrna on the Mediterranean Sea in September 1652. Not allowed to go to the Vatican for political reasons, Boym began to prepare his texts on China for publication. He succeeded only in publishing a collection of engravings and descriptions of the flora, *Flora sinensis*.¹⁷ The only work printed during the author's lifetime, it was published in Vienna in 1656 by the Mateo Ricci publishing house and is the first systematic description of the nature of the Far East in Europe. The work consists of seventy pages and twenty-three engravings accompanied with Chinese characters, descriptions, as well as Boym's own drawings of the plants such as the lychee fruit and the banana tree, previously unknown in Europe, as well as of animals. His other works remained in manuscript, and were published in fragments posthumously, or under the names of plagiarists or compilers.¹⁸ Only after the election of a new pope, Alexander VII, was Boym welcomed to the Vatican, where he received letters and presents intended for the last Ming emperor. In 1656 he set off for China again, where, after many adventures, he arrived at the beginning of 1659. Due to the war on the Vietnamese–Chinese border, he was not able to reach Yunnan, where the Ming court resided at that time. Michał Boym died near the border on August 22, 1659. Monika Miazek, who has been researching Boym's legacy for years, emphasizes the versatility of the Polish Jesuit, who was a political messenger, a missionary, and a scientist studying nature, as well as a prolific author of scientific and popular works, which, thanks to their attractive content and form, won the interest of readers and spread knowledge about China.¹⁹

Interestingly, Michał Boym's biography and works became widely known to the general public in Poland and his name began to appear in the speeches of both Polish and Chinese politicians only as late as in the end of the twentieth century. It was Edward Kajdański (1925–2020), an amateur Sinologist educated at Harbin's Polytechnic, a member of the Polish diaspora in Harbin, who for several decades had traced Boym's works in many European and Taiwanese libraries and archives, even taking an advanced course in traditional Chinese herbal pharmacy in order to better analyze the Jesuit's writing. Thanks to Kajdański's efforts and extensively published texts,²⁰ the achievements of the "Polish Marco Polo," as Boym is popularly called, became widely known. However, it should be remembered that the Jesuit's works, not translated into Polish,²¹ did not exert any significant influence on the growth of interest in China among the Poles, nor did they contribute to the development of Polish research on

¹⁷Michaële Boym, *Flora Sinensis fructus floresque humillime porrigens* (Vienna: typis Matthaei Rictij, 1656).

¹⁸A complete list of manuscripts and published works was compiled and published by Monika Miazek in *Studia Boymiana*, edited by Aleksander Wojciech Mikołajczak and Monika Miazek (Gniezno: Wydawnictwo Collegium Europaeum Gnesnense, 2004).

¹⁹Monika Miazek, *Flora Sinensis by Michał Boym SI* (Gniezno: Wydawnictwo Fundacji Collegium Europaeum Gnesnense, 2005), 178.

²⁰Dozens of articles on Boym and his works are collected in a comprehensive volume by Edward Kajdański, *Jak odkrywałem Michała Boyma—polskiego Marco Polo* [How I discovered Michal Boym—Polish Marco Polo] (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2018).

²¹Apart from one letter by Boym included in the collection of letters of or concerning the German Jesuits, see Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku*, 94.

China. It was not until the nineteenth century that Boym's unique life story attracted the interest of researchers, and many publications devoted to his life and works appeared, but only in a narrow circle of people interested in China.²² It is worth adding that the Chinese Academy of Sciences had Kajdański's 2002 translation from Latin into Polish of Boym's magnum opus retranslated into Chinese. Its publication in 2013 marked a beginning of Chinese research on Boym's works.²³ Letters and accounts sent by missionaries from India and China enjoyed great popularity in Europe and were also the basis for compilations of knowledge. The history of Polish diplomacy often mentions the efforts of King Jan III Sobieski (1629–1696) to establish contacts with Emperor Kangxi (1654–1722) and to send him a letter, to which the Polish king allegedly received a reply.²⁴ It is also known that since 1685 an advisor to Emperor Kangxi, the Franciscan Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), corresponded with the Polish king.²⁵ Although Sobieski did not manage to establish relations with China, his interest in the distant country is evidenced in the numerous Chinese interior design details and objects in the royal palace he built for his wife at Wilanów.²⁶ An important channel for the popularization of knowledge about Asian countries among pupils and monks was the Jesuit school theatre, religious in feature and moralistic in function.²⁷ Far Eastern themes appeared relatively frequently in the theatrical repertoires of the period, although Japanese topics were much more prevalent than the Chinese ones.²⁸

In eighteenth-century Poland, China was still mentioned in popular compendia and encyclopedias.²⁹ But the information in these was rife with errors and misrepresentations that were due to an over-reliance on foreign Jesuit works of the previous century, such as the *China monumentis* by Jesuit Athanasius Kircher,³⁰ or to the vivid imagination of the authors. Translations of Chinese literature continued to appear in European languages, most often in French: for example a volume of Confucius' *Analects* was

²²For a complete list of scholarly publications devoted to Boym and a comprehensive biography, see Nguyen, *Polscy misionarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku*, 82–99. In 2019, a website in Polish, English, and Chinese devoted entirely to Boym was created: www.michalboym.pl/. It includes a biography, descriptions of works, and links to available online copies.

²³Bomige 卜弥格, *Bomige de wenji* 卜弥格文集, translated by Zhang Zhenhui (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2013).

²⁴Cyrzyk, "Polsko-chińskie kontakty w ciągu dziejów" [Polish–Chinese contacts throughout history], *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 1–2 (1989), 9.

²⁵Stanisław Bednarski, "Chiński list Króla Jana III" [Chinese letter from King John III], *Przegląd Powszechny* (1933), 533–34.

²⁶Anna Ekielska-Mardal, *Daleki Wschód w Wilanowie* [Far East in Wilanów] (Warsaw: Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawnicze "Rzeczpospolita," 2008).

²⁷Jan Okoń, *Dramat i teatr szkolny: Sceny jezuickie XVII w.* [Drama and school theater: Jesuit scenes of the seventeenth century] (Wrocław–Warsaw: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1970), 303.

²⁸The bibliography of Old Polish drama lists eighty-three plays connected with Far Eastern themes, seventeen of which dealt with China, the rest with Japan and with the person of St Francis Xavier, see Nguyen, *Polscy misionarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku*, 280–81.

²⁹The most widely read compendia of knowledge at that time were: Włodzimierz Łubieński, *Świat We Wszystkich Częściach Większych y Mniejszych: To Iest W ... Geograficznie, Chronologicznie y Historyczne Okryslony Opisaniem* [The world in all its parts larger and smaller: It is in ... A geographically, chronologically, and historically covered description] (Wrocław: Drukarnia Jezuitów, 1741), 599–605; Benedykt Chmielowski, *Nowe Ateny* (New Athens) (Lwów: Drukarnia Pawła Józefa Golczewskiego, 1745), 603–619.

³⁰Athanasius Kircher, *China monumentis, qua saris, qua profanis, necnon variis naturae et artis spectaculis* (Amsterdam: Apud Jacobum a Meurs, 1667).

published with an extensive introduction in 1784.³¹ The reception of knowledge about China in Poland was clearly lagging behind the West, with greater interest in this country growing among the Poles only in the second half of the eighteenth century, but lasting somewhat longer than in Europe, until the 1820s.³² Information about China also appeared in magazines and periodicals, where the theme of China or a figure of a Chinese traveler were used to reflect on the Polish political and social situation.³³ At the end of the eighteenth century Poland lost its independence due to the growing rift among the most influential aristocratic families. Even an attempt by the patriotic reformist party to adopt a progressive constitution—the very first in Europe—did not save Poland from being partitioned by three powerful neighbors, resulting in 123 years of political nonexistence. A number of uprisings aimed at regaining independence and sovereignty followed. In such times China became a generic term, a convenient form for didactic literature. Just as Poland did for the Chinese a century later when scholars like Kang Youwei warned its compatriots against the Polish fate of the late Qing empire, should it not have undertaken any institutional change. Polish authors were less interested in the origin of the texts than in the content of the works set in the eastern scenery that they valued the most.³⁴ There were also authors who were genuinely interested in China and consciously used information about this country to make critical comparisons with the situation in Poland. In his treatise *O Rzeczypospolitej* (About the Commonwealth), Franciszek Karpiński (1741–1825) often refers to China as a positive example for social issues, such as the situation of peasants.³⁵ The acclaimed poet and prose writer, Bishop Ignacy Krasicki (1735–1801), one of the leading figures of the Polish Enlightenment, included information on Chinese civilization in his works and referred to China as an example when analyzing various issues concerning Polish affairs.³⁶ In *Rozmowa między Platonem a Konfucjuszem* (A conversation between Plato and Confucius), Krasicki allows Confucius to win the argument. In this work Krasicki follows the trend of other Enlightenment writers, such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Leibniz, who saw Confucius primarily as a practically oriented moralist. At the end of the eighteenth century, the drama *The Orphan of Zhao* 趙氏孤兒 by Ji Junxiang 紀君祥, as adapted by Voltaire, was very popular in Europe and Poland.³⁷ The popularity of China resulted in the publication of works that were supposed to be translations from Chinese originals, but in fact were works by Polish authors stylized in Chinese fashion and reflected the prevailing fascination with the Orient.³⁸

³¹ *Krótki Zbior Starożytnych Moralistow T. 2: Mysli Moralne Konfucyusza*, translated by Grzegorz Zachariasiewicz (Łowicz: Drukarnia Prymasowska, 1784), a Polish translation of the work *Collection des moralistes anciens, dédiée au roi: Pensées morales de divers auteurs Chinois: recueillies et traduites du Latin et du Russe par M. Levesque* (Paris, 1782).

³² Cyrzyk, "Chiny w piśmiennictwie polskim do końca XVIII w." [China in Polish writing to the end of the eighteenth century], *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 3 (1963), 192.

³³ For a list of journal articles from this period, see Janusz Tazbir, "Moda na chińczynę w Polsce XVIII w." [Fashion for Chineseness in eighteenth-century Poland], *Biułetyn Historii Sztuki* 11.3–4 (1949), 382–92.

³⁴ Jan Reychman, *Orient w kulturze polskiego Oświecenia* [Orient in the culture of the Polish Enlightenment] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1964), 203.

³⁵ Franciszek Karpiński, *Dzieła* [Works] (Kraków: K.J. Turowski, 1862), 866.

³⁶ For a list of Krasicki's texts related to Chinese themes, see Cyrzyk, "Chiny w piśmiennictwie polskim do końca XVIII w.", 192.

³⁷ The drama was translated from French as many as three times, by Józef Epifani Minasowicz in 1755, anonymously in 1781 and by Stanisław Trembecki and Jerzy Radowicki in 1806.

³⁸ E.g. *Pamiętniki filozofa samotnika czyli człowieka z innego świata: po chińsku i po moskiewsku napisane, z włoskiego na polski język przetłumaczone* [Memoirs of a lonely philosopher or a man from another world: written in Chinese and Muscovite, translated from Italian into Polish] (Warsaw: Drukarnia

Reception of China in Poland in the eighteenth century was two-tracked. The first trend, more common but also more superficial, was the style of *Chinoiserie*, feature of the Rococo. *Chinoiserie* manifested itself in applied and garden art, and collecting, as well as in the decorations of shows, plays, masquerades, and balls. The second trend was the Enlightenment propagation of elements of Chinese philosophy, history, and literature for aesthetic and moralizing purposes. At that time, knowledge about China was mainly drawn from foreign missionaries, as the missionary activity of Polish monks practically ended when Poland lost its independence and after the secularization of religious orders.

In the nineteenth century Romanticism replaced the Enlightenment as the mainstream cultural trend. Eagerly seeking Oriental inspiration, Romantics almost completely ignored China, which, as an absolute monarchy, lost its charm in the eyes of the artists propagating freedom and republican slogans. The ideological climate was not conducive to praising the system and civilization of China, but this did not stop European research on language, religion, culture, and history, and Poland was no exception. The works published in Polish were still compilations of information taken from foreign publications; and though these brought no new information, they were viewed through a new set of attitudes. In the nineteenth century China was shown in a negative light, and criticism focused mainly on mentality and sociopolitical realities.³⁹ Polish studies of East Asia in the nineteenth century had no permanent scientific or financial basis, as this was not possible after the collapse of independent statehood in 1795. A small number of Polish travelers reached China as officials in the service of other countries, such as Jan Potocki (1761–1815), an envoy of the Russian Tsar in 1806,⁴⁰ or Jerzy Tymkowski (1790–1875) in 1820–1821,⁴¹ or as exiles sent there for participation in independence movements (e.g. Maurycy August Beniowski (1746–1786)).⁴² The travelers did not have any Orientalist education, but they became experts on the subject thanks to their own observations and experience.⁴³

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority of Polish travelers reached only the peripheral Russo-Chinese borderland, and just a few explored the country by sailing into English-controlled ports. One of the exceptions was Paweł Sapieha (1860–1934), who crossed the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea by ship (Bombay [Mumbai], Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Yokohama, Tokyo), then landed in Korea and started an overland journey into north-eastern China.⁴⁴ Polish names also appear among the participants of expeditions of other countries to China

P. Dufour, 1784); *Rozprawa chińskiego mandaryna Chen-Uei o kobietach* [Chinese mandarin Chen-Uei's treatise on women] (Warsaw: N. Glücksberga, 1819).

³⁹Daniel Kalinowski, "Projekcje i projekty: Stanisława Potockiego i Jerzego Tymkowskiego obrazy Chin" [Projections and projects. Stanisław Potocki and Jerzy Tymkowski's images of China], in *Pogranicza, Kresy, Wschód a idea Europy* [Borderland, Eastern borderlands and the idea of Europe], seria II: Wiktor Choriew in memoriam, arrangement and introduction Jarosław Ławski, edited by Anna Janicka, Grzegorz Kowalski, and Łukasz Zabielski (Białystok: Uniwersytet w Białymostku, 2013), 669–80.

⁴⁰Jan Potocki, *Podróże* [Travels], edited by Leszek Kukulski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1959), 409–31.

⁴¹Kalinowski, "Projekcje i projekty," 675–78.

⁴²Edward Kajdański, *Tajemnica Beniowskiego: Odkrycia, intrigi, falszerstwa* [The mystery of Beniowski: Discoveries, intrigues, forgeries] (Warsaw: Volumen, 1994).

⁴³Daniel Kalinowski, "Oswajanie Dalekiego Wschodu: o trzech polskich podróżach orientalnych" [Getting to know the Far East: three Polish Oriental travels], *Ars inter Culturas* 1 (2010), 155–65.

⁴⁴Paweł Sapieha, *Podróż na wschód Azji 1888–1889 z ilustracjami w tekście* [Journey to Eastern Asia 1888–1889 with illustrations in the text] (Lwów: Gubrynowicz i Schmidt, 1899).

or among diplomatic corps, e.g. of Austria, France, and the USA.⁴⁵ Though rare, there were also voyagers influenced by Darwinism and racist prejudice, such as Bronisław Rejchman (1848–1936), who formulated very radical and unflattering opinions about the Chinese, often after a very short stay on Chinese territory.⁴⁶ Following the history of the reception of knowledge about China in Poland, one cannot help but notice the asymmetry of contacts and interest, as no Chinese voyagers to Poland were recorded in the sources until the twentieth century.

An important moment in Polish–Chinese relations was the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, when China signed with Russia a secret agreement directed against Japan on building a railroad to Vladivostok and with a branch from Harbin to today's Dalian, running through Chinese Manchuria. Construction of this railway initiated the history of Polish diaspora in China. The ground of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the railway administration were extraterritorial and subject to Russia. In 1898 a group of Russian engineers led by a Pole, Adam Szydłowski, arrived in China and chose a site on the Sungari River as their base, founding the city of Harbin on May 16, 1898; the first mayor of the new city was also a Pole, Eugeniusz Dynowski. It is estimated that about 7,000 Poles worked on the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway (1897–1903), and during the fifty years of the “railway” diaspora’s existence between 10,000 and 20,000 Poles lived in Manchuria.⁴⁷

Poland established official diplomatic relations with China for the first time at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, and the first diplomatic representations were established in 1933. In the years 1930–1932, Professor Witold Jabłoński (1901–1957), as a League of Nations expert helping to build a modern educational system in China, stayed in Beijing to work on his doctoral dissertation; later, in 1936–1938, he was a lecturer of French language and literature at Tsinghua University and Yanqing University in Beijing. In the course of his first stay he traveled (sometimes on foot) in the provinces of Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan. There were also other Polish scholars in China, such as Bogdan Richter (1891–1980), Jan Godzimir Jaworski (1903–1945), Andrzej Krzesiński (1884–1964), and Franciszek Biały (1878–1936). The last of these was a professor of sociology at the Catholic Furen University in Beijing and a founder of the journal *Monumenta Serica*, which still continues to be published today.⁴⁸ In the interwar period, two Polish women also lived in China and used their experiences and knowledge of China to write books. The first of them was Stéphanie Rosenthal (1883–1970) 華羅琛, who met and married a Chinese student in France and moved with him to China. One of her novels, *Love and duty* 戀愛與義務 was a huge success in China.⁴⁹ Another woman, Ilona Ralf Sues went to China in 1936, where over the course of several years she met the most important figures in Chinese politics—she even worked for Madame Chiang and interviewed Mao Zedong. *Shark's Fins and Millet* is her insider’s account from the years in China torn both by the war with Japan as well as the domestic one.⁵⁰ In the interwar period, the greatest

⁴⁵Jan Rowiński and Justyna Szczudlik, “Z historii kontaktów polsko-chińskich (do 1945 r.)” [From the history of Polish–Chinese contacts (until 1945)], *Azja-Pacyfik* 8 (2005), 22–24.

⁴⁶Bronisław Rejchman, *Z Dalekiego Wschodu: Wrażenia, obrazki, opisy z dobrowolnej podróży po Syberię* [From the Far East. Impressions, pictures, descriptions from a voluntary journey in Siberia] (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1881).

⁴⁷Marian Kałuski, *Polacy w Chinach* [Poles in China] (Warsaw: Pax, 2001), 77–80.

⁴⁸Rowiński and Szczudlik, “Z historii kontaktów polsko-chińskich (do 1945 r.),” 36.

⁴⁹Irene Eber and Joan Hill, “Luo Chen (1883–1970): A Jewish Author in China,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues* 31 (2017), 169–79.

⁵⁰Ilona Ralf Sues, *Shark's Fins and Millet* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1944).

contribution to bringing Chinese language, culture, and literature to the Poles was made by two self-taught Sinologists and an Orientalist educated in Moscow: Doman Wieluch (1887–1976), Jan Wypler (1890–1965), and Remigiusz Kwiatkowski (1884–1961). Wieluch, a philosopher and chemist by education, learned Chinese in Denmark which he left after the outbreak of the First World War. After returning to Poland, he was engaged in coal chemistry as a researcher but he continued to study the Chinese language. The fruit of his passion was the first Chinese–Polish dictionary, *Słownik chińsko-polski do czytania tekstów chińskich bez przygotowania* (Dictionary of Chinese and Polish for reading Chinese texts without preparation), published in an edition of 200 copies in 1936. The peculiarity of this dictionary was its complete lack of Chinese characters. Wieluch created his own method of describing Chinese characters. He isolated 296 graphic elements to which he gave arbitrary names mostly taken from English. Wieluch believed that “this transposition from characters to letters is very simple, does not require any study, and after a very short time it happens completely automatically from memory.” His original method was intended to considerably speed up the learning of Chinese, because while Sinologists using other dictionaries “go through them comparing the nameless zigzag with lots of others” devoting a lot of mental work, attention, and time to it, reaching for his dictionary one would be able to find any word in no time.⁵¹ For example, the element 大 was given the name *big*, the element 示 was given the name *St*, and the character 奈 consisting of these elements is found in the dictionary under the description *big St*. In this way he described about 6,000 characters in his dictionary. In giving the element 齊 the name *Poland*, Wieluch wrote: “it imagines a grain field, it means a fertile plain, and it also means some ancient state—for this patriotic gesture I will have difficulties with my system in international studies, and Polish Sinology will not support me.”⁵² This indeed happened. Despite the fact that Wieluch distributed his dictionary to a wide circle of Polish Orientalists, his original method did not gain recognition among Polish scholars and was eventually forgotten, as was its creator.⁵³

It was under Wieluch’s influence, and using his dictionary, that the Silesian polyglot and translator Jan Wypler started to learn Chinese in 1936 (he was 46); he published his first translations of Chinese poetry and fragments of philosophical works only a year later. Wypler was a great fan of Wieluch’s method, and in 1939 he published a twenty-four page booklet entitled *Jak można łatwo nauczyć się po chińsku* (How to learn Chinese easily) in which he summarized his master’s method.⁵⁴ For many years Jan Wypler was one of two literary translators from Chinese into Polish (the other one was Professor Jabłoński), and his translations of poems, dramas, and stories appeared in many local and national magazines.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Doman Wieluch, *Słownik chińsko-polski do czytania tekstów chińskich bez przygotowania* [Dictionary of Chinese and Polish for reading Chinese texts without preparation] (Katowice, 1936), 2.

⁵² Wieluch, *Słownik chińsko-polski do czytania tekstów chińskich bez przygotowania*, 8.

⁵³ It was met with interest abroad, however, and after refining the method the dictionary was published in English as *The Graphic Transcription of Literary Chinese Characters*, by Doman Wieluch; with a foreword by Bernard Karlgren (Amsterdam: Nature Method Language Centre, 1975).

⁵⁴ Jan Wypler, *Jak można łatwo nauczyć się po chińsku* [How to learn Chinese easily] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Fantana, 1929).

⁵⁵ Wypler’s biography and a bibliography of his translations can be found on the website dedicated to him, <http://wypler.exec.pl/>, and in the article by Zbigniew Hojka, “Działalność translatorska Jana Wyplera” [Jan Wypler’s translation activity], *Wiek stare i nowe* 4 (2005), 158–64.

Remigiusz Kwiatkowski, who was exiled from Congress Poland for his independence activities, used the time spent in Russia to pursue Oriental studies in Moscow, travel around Asia, and work as a journalist. Kwiatkowski was primarily fascinated by Japan and its culture, but he also knew Chinese, and he published a book on Chinese literature as early as in 1907.⁵⁶ For several decades Kwiatkowski, himself a poet and writer, translated Chinese poetry, proverbs, and aphorisms.⁵⁷ Owing to the great popularity and high print run of his books, some sayings entered the Polish language permanently, e.g. *carry an umbrella when the weather is fine, do not hit a woman even with a flower*, although there are doubts as to whether Kwiatkowski actually translated Chinese texts, or whether he invented them and merely stylized them as Oriental ones.⁵⁸

In the interwar period, Japanese culture became much in vogue among the Polish intelligentsia, and this led to an interest in Chinese culture. Polish writers and poets included references to China in their works, and volumes of Chinese poetry were published (from translations in European languages), although their consistency with the originals left much to be desired.⁵⁹ The most famous collection of this type is *The Chinese Flute* translated from French, which, due to the person of the translator—the very famous Polish poet Leopold Staff (1878–1957), became very popular and inspired many Polish poets.⁶⁰

Sinology as a Field of Study

For a long time, institutionalized teaching of Chinese in Poland was limited to isolated courses run by enthusiasts; for example, at Kraków University (now Jagiellonian University) lectures on Confucian philosophy were given in 1785 by law professor Antoni Popławski (1739–1789).⁶¹ However, these were sporadic phenomena. Full Sinological studies did not appear until 1933, when a Sinology Department was established at the Institute of Oriental Studies (then within the Faculty of Humanities). It was staffed by lecturers educated in France: Jan Godzimir Jaworski (1903–1945), a scholar

⁵⁶ Remigiusz Kwiatkowski, *Literatura chińska* [Chinese literature] (Warsaw: M. Arct, 1907).

⁵⁷ *Liryki* [Lyrics] (Moskwa, 1911); *Antologi chińskie* [Chinese anthology] (Petersburg: Wydawnictwo "Głosu polskiego," 1914); *Parasol noś i przy pogodzie* [Carry an umbrella even when the sun shines] (Poznań: Drukarnia i Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, 1921); *I nocą nie wychodź nago: aforyzmy wschodnie* [And do not go out naked at night: Eastern aphorisms] (Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, 1923); *Liście bambusu: poezje chińskie* [Bamboo leaves: Chinese poetry] (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Ignis," 1922); *Nie zaglądaj za parawan* [Don't look behind the folding screen] (Warsaw: self-publishing, 1926); *Kobiety nie bij nawet kwiatem: rady i uwagi wschodnie o kobieco i miłości* [Do not hit a woman even with a flower: Eastern advice and remarks on woman and love] (Warsaw: Polska Zjednoczona, 1928); *Mój jedyny, mój kochany nosi kaftan z cze-sun-czy: poezje chińskie* [My one and only, my darling wears a caftan of che-sun-czy: Chinese poetry] (Warsaw: Polska Zjednoczona, 1929).

⁵⁸ Adam Bednarczyk, "Parasol noś i przy pogodzie? Wspomnienie o Remigiuszu Kwiatkowskim (1884–1961) i jego zainteresowaniach (nie tylko) aforystyką 'krainy Wiśniowego Drzewa'" ["Carry an umbrella even when the sun shines." A tribute to Remigiusz Kwiatkowski (1884–1961) and his interest in (not only) aphoristics of the "land of the Cherry Tree"], *Literraria Copernicana* 4.24 (2017), 86.

⁵⁹ An example of this phenomenon is, for example, the collection of poetry *Melodie Dalekiego Wschodu* [Melodies of the Far East] (Wiedeń: Biblioteka Międzynarodowa Gemma, 1922) by Leon Koppens, who wrote in the afterword: "These lyric poems of China and Japan, based as to their content on the best foreign translations, are as to their form the idea of my own intuition."

⁶⁰ Leopold Staff, *Fletnia chińska* [Chinese flute] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Mortkowicza, 1922). The basis for the translation was the collection *La flûte de jade, poésies chinoises* by Franz Franz Toussaint, published in 1920.

⁶¹ Kwietyniewska, "Wiedza o Chinach w polskim Oświeceniu. Krótkie wprowadzenie," 47.

of Chinese Buddhism and folk literature, and the already mentioned Witold Jabłoński, undoubtedly one of the most important figures in the history of Polish Sinology.⁶² In 1924, Jabłoński completed his philosophical studies at the University of Warsaw and left for France, where at the Institut des hautes études chinoises (IHEC) he became a student of the Buddhologist Jan Przyłuski (1885–1944) and the Sinologist Marcel Granet (1884–1940), under whose supervision he defended his master's thesis in 1927. Until 1930 he studied at the Collège de France, where Henri Maspero (1883–1945) and Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) lectured, and at the Sorbonne. He returned to Poland and in 1933 defended his doctoral thesis in philosophy on the basis of *Le sentiment personnel et le conformisme dans le Li Ki*. He taught at the Sinology Department from 1935 to 1957, with breaks due to his diplomatic work in Nankin, as well as the war. Jabłoński's book on the history of Chinese literature and the anthology of prose and poetry he prepared together with other lecturers were the only publications of this kind in the Polish language until recent years.⁶³ In 1953, on the initiative and under the editorship of Jabłoński, a full translation of the philosophical treatise *Czuang-tsy: Prawdziwa Księga Południowego Kwiatu* (*Zhuangzi: True classic of the Southern Flower Country*) with an introductory scholarly essay by the editor was published, and awarded a state prize.⁶⁴ In 1959 when the twenty-five hundredth anniversary of Qu Yuan was celebrated under UNESCO auspices, the Polish translation of his poems "Songs of Chu" was published again on the initiative and editorial effort of Jabłoński.

The international situation after World War Two placed Poland in the same bloc of Communist countries with China, and this resulted in regular diplomatic, economic, and scientific contacts between the two countries. As early as the beginning of the 1950s, the Sinology Department maintained permanent contacts with the People's Republic of China. In the early 1950s, the first Chinese language teachers appeared in Warsaw as Professor Jabłoński emphasized the importance of learning spoken language.

What Sinological studies at the University of Warsaw looked like in the 1950s and 1960s is known partly from the interviews with nine people conducted by Marcin Jacoby between 2011 and 2013 as part of a Taiwanese project on the history of Sinology in Central and Eastern Europe.⁶⁵ The respondents, some of them students of Sinology in the 1950s, travelled to China between 1950 and 1964 on government scholarships. In the first years, close to the end of the World War Two up to the late 1950s the Sinology Department had no textbooks, students learned only from notes taken during classes, and there was only one Chinese–English dictionary in the library. Later, the new edition of Oshanin's Chinese–Russian dictionary and Russian

⁶²Biographical information from Janusz Chmielewski, "Witold Jabłoński," *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 1.25 (1958), 3–14, and Katarzyna Golik, "Witold Jabłoński—nieślusznie zapomniany polski sinolog" [Witold Jablonski—unjustly forgotten Polish sinologist], *Azja-Pacyfik* 12 (2009), 218–29 (second text contains a full bibliography of Jablonski's works and translations.)

⁶³Witold Jabłoński, *Z dziejów literatury chińskiej* [The history of Chinese literature] (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1956); *Antologia literatury chińskiej* [Anthology of Chinese literature], translated by Janusz Chmielewski, Aleksy Dębnicki, Witold Jabłoński, and Ogierd Wojtasiewicz (Warsaw: PWN, 1956).

⁶⁴Czuang-Tsy, *Prawdziwa Księga Południowego Kwiatu* [True classic of the Southern Flower Country] (Warsaw: PWN, 1953).

⁶⁵Marcin Jacoby, *Oral History of China Scholars in Poland: Final Report* (2013)—as the interviews are currently not available online I would like to thank the author for making them available for the sake of this research.

handbooks of Chinese available in Warsaw bookstores were of great help. There was a lively cultural exchange between Warsaw and Beijing. From 1950 to 1956, five groups of young Poles went to China on scholarships. Among them were future ambassadors (Ksawery Burski, Zdzisław Góralczyk, Bogusław Zakrzewski) and scholars (Jan Rowiński, Roman Ślawiński). In the autumn of 1956 a change in the politics in Poland, known as Polish October, as well as the initiation of Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward (1959) and the growing ideological split between the USSR and China all had a negative impact on Polish–Chinese cooperation. The student exchanges continued in a very limited form. The last Polish scholarship holder was a student of psychology, Krzysztof Gawlikowski (1940–2021), who went to China in 1964; he was supposed to spend four years, but because of the political situation there he was forced to return to Poland in 1966. After the sudden death of Professor Jabłoński in Beijing in 1957, and the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in China a decade later, there were fewer prospects and possibilities of direct—whether working or research—contacts with the Chinese, and there was less interest in learning the contemporary language. Moreover, the lack of exchange of students and the withdrawal of Chinese teachers also pushed Warsaw Sinology towards the study of ancient China, with professors specializing in Classical Chinese, ancient Chinese logic, or ancient literature. Most of the courses offered classical language and grammar classes. In the memoirs there is a recurrent theme of Sinology as a marginal field of study, where both the staff and students avoided involvement outside the classroom for fear of supervision, censorship, and repression by the Communist regime. None of the Polish professors in the 1960s openly condemned China, because it would mean support for Soviet Russia, but none supported Maoist China, either. Polish Sinology chose a decades-long silence and avoidance of political engagement.⁶⁶ The leadership of the Sinology Department was taken over by Janusz Chmielewski (1916–1998), who held the position until 1981. Chmielewski had been a scholarship holder at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique in Paris in 1947–48, where he worked with eminent French scholars such as Paul Demieville (1894–1979), Édouard Mestre (1883–1950), and George Coëdès (1886–1969). Upon his return to Poland in 1950, he received a doctorate for his work *The Typological Evolution of the Chinese Language*, and in 1955 he became a professor. In 1962 Chmielewski received a grant from the Ford Foundation and traveled to the United States for a series of lectures.⁶⁷ His most important work on early Chinese logic was the first attempt to apply the principles of formal logic to Chinese classical texts. It was published in parts from 1962 to 1969 in the journal *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*.⁶⁸ For political reasons, Polish researchers' exchange with the world was quite limited, and Chmielewski's groundbreaking work was barely known outside the Polish academy. Two other professors, Olgierd Wojtasiewicz (1916–1995) and Tadeusz Żbikowski (1930–1989), also made significant contributions to the development of Polish Sinology. Wojtasiewicz was a linguist and translator of classical and contemporary Chinese literature. Together with Jabłoński and Chmielewski, he was one of the translators of *Songs of Ch'u* and *Zhuangzi: The True Book of the Southern Flower*. He introduced short stories of Lu Xun and some

⁶⁶Bogdan Góralczyk, "Polish Sinology—Reflection Paper," *Mongolian Journal of International Affairs* 19 (2014), 93.

⁶⁷Marek Mejor, "Janusz Chmielewski (1916–1998). Obituary," *Monumenta Serica* 47 (1999), 501–3.

⁶⁸Chmielewski's texts on Chinese language and logic were published in the volume Janusz Chmielewski, *Language and Logic in Ancient China. Collected Papers on the Chinese Language and Logic*, edited by Marek Mejor (Warsaw: PAN, 2009).

works by Lao She to the Polish readers. In 1957 he published *Wstęp do teorii tłumaczenia* (An introduction to the theory of translation), which was one of the first academic publications on translation in Poland. Wojtasiewicz wrote of equivalence in translation two years before Roman Jakobson (1896–1982), and he based his definition of translation on the principle of similar effect seven years before Eugene Nida (1914–2011), but because of the language barrier and the country's isolation from the Western academic world, his work went unnoticed outside Poland.⁶⁹ Tadeusz Źbikowski specialized in the beginnings of Chinese dramas written in the then-common language baihua, as well as in classical and contemporary Chinese literature and religion. He wrote several books on Chinese mythology and philosophy and translated into Polish a large part of the Ming novel *Journey to the West*, as well as Lao She's *Teahouse* and *Divorce* to name just a few.⁷⁰ Mieczysław Jerzy Künstler (1933–2007), a student of Professor Chmielewski, specialized in Chinese linguistics. He became an author of many scholarly works, popular books, and translations of Chinese literature.⁷¹ He started working as an assistant at the University of Warsaw even before his graduation in 1956, when he left for China with a group of students. He spent one and a half years in Beijing as a postgraduate student at the Beijing University. Upon his return to Poland due to his involvement in the Chinese–Polish Dictionary Workshop⁷² he was granted a scholarship to France and spent a year at the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE) in Paris, where he worked with Alexis Rygaloff (1922–2007), Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), and Max Kaltenmark (1910–2002), and made the acquaintance of Jacques Gernet (1921–2018). He received his Ph.D. in 1962, with a dissertation entitled *Les formations adverbiales a quasi-suffixe en Chinois archaïque et dans la langue de l'époque des Han*. His main field of interest was linguistics, and he summed up many years of his work in the monograph *Języki chińskie* (Chinese languages), in which, from a diachronic and synchronic perspective, he described the developmental phases of Chinese languages from antiquity to the present day.⁷³ Künstler was extremely hard-working, and he left behind about 200 works (articles, translations, and books). He actively participated in many Polish and foreign organizations and exerted a great influence on Polish Sinology in the second half of the twentieth century. His fellow researcher Zbigniew Ślupski (1934–2020), an expert on classical and contemporary Chinese literature, was also associated with Warsaw Sinology. Born in Ostrava, until the end of his life he published also in Czech and cooperated with Czech Sinologists. Ślupski worked on *The Scholars* (儒林外史) by Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓, and edited collections of ancient Chinese literature and contemporary short stories important for students of Sinology.⁷⁴ Currently, there are two professors who work

⁶⁹Krzesztof Hejnowski, "Olgierd Wojtasiewicz—ojciec polskiej translatoryki" [Olgierd Wojtasiewicz—the father of Polish translation studies], *Przekładaniec* 26 (2012), 108.

⁷⁰Wu Ch'eng-en, *Malpi bunt* [Monkey rebellion] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1976); Wu Ch'eng-en, *Wędrówka na Zachód* [Journey to the West] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1984).

⁷¹His detailed biography and list of most important publications in Ewa Zajdler, "Mieczysław Jerzy Künstler (1933–2007): Między Paryżem a Pekinem" [Mieczysław Jerzy Künstler (1933–2007): Between Paris and Beijing], in *Portrety uczonych. Profesorowie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego po 1945* (A–K) (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016), 687–97.

⁷²Despite several attempts since the 1950s, no Chinese–Polish dictionary has been compiled to date.

⁷³Mieczysław Jerzy Künstler, *Języki chińskie* [Chinese languages] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2000); English translation of this book was published as *The Sinitic Languages: A Contribution to Sinological Linguistics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

⁷⁴Współczesne opowiadania chińskie [Modern Chinese short stories], translated by Irena Kalużyńska, Joanna Markiewicz, and Zbigniew Ślupski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1994);

and publish in the Sinology Department: Lidia Kasarełło, a specialist in contemporary Chinese literature and theatre,⁷⁵ and Irena Kałużyńska, a linguist specializing in onomastics.⁷⁶ However, the younger generation of researchers from the department does not limit themselves to those two fields, publishing in the broad discipline of China's cultural, religious and political studies as well. For instance, Małgorzata Religa focuses on the religious issues of contemporary China, but she also translates literature and Chinese philosophical texts; her most recent work is on Mencius, with some of the commentaries for the first time translated from Chinese into a foreign language.⁷⁷ Józef Pawłowski specializes the contemporary political issues. After 1966, contacts with China were severed, Chinese "revisionists" were officially condemned, and Soviet literature on China, much of it ideologically hostile, was translated into Polish. At that time, many stereotypes of China were formed (poor country, working for a bowl of rice, all people wearing identical uniforms, bicycles, etc.), which shaped Poles' perception of China for many decades. Only in the mid-1980s, was there the beginning of a gradual warming of Polish–Chinese relations.

The eighties brought the second department of Polish Sinology—at Adam Mickiewicz University (UAM) in Poznań, which has a long tradition of teaching Oriental languages such as Turkish, Sanskrit, and Hebrew. The department of Languages of Asia and Africa was established in 1986, due to the work of Jerzy Bańczerowski (b. 1938), a renowned scholar with very broad linguistic interests such as Uralic and Indo-European languages as well as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese, who also published some research on Chinese,⁷⁸ and another linguist, Alfred Majewicz; an MA course for Chinese started in 1988. From the very beginning Sinology at Adam Mickiewicz University has been more practically oriented, with many classes in contemporary Chinese, and research on Chinese minority languages; and this remains the focus of Poznań Sinology today. Even today, there is a conviction among Polish Sinologists that Warsaw Sinology offers a curriculum that puts more emphasis on ancient China (classes in classical Chinese and the teaching of both writing systems) and on culture, whereas Poznań Sinology concentrates on modern language use and pays less attention to cultural content. One of the best known professors of Sinology in Poznań is Profesor Izabella Łabędzka, who has extensively published on contemporary Chinese theater, the works of Gao Xingjian, and contemporary Chinese poetry.⁷⁹

Sometimes a coincidence drastically changes history. June 4, 1989 became the most important date in Polish–Chinese relations for two decades. On this day, the first free

⁷⁵Wczesne piśmiennictwo chińskie. Wybór tekstów [Early Chinese writing. A selection of texts], translated by Kałużyńska, Małgorzata Religa, and Śląski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Agade, 2004).

⁷⁶Her major publications are *Totemy życia ... Chińska literatura poszukiwania korzeni* [Totems of life ... Chinese literature of roots searching] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2000); *Chińska kultura symboliczna. Jej współczesne metamorfozy w literaturze, teatrze i malarstwie* [Chinese symbolic culture. Its contemporary metamorphoses in literature, theatre and painting] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2011).

⁷⁷Her major publications include *Contemporary Chinese Place Names: Names of Administrative Divisions at County and City Level* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2002), *Chinese Female Namings: Past and Present* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Agade, 2008).

⁷⁸Mencjusz z wybranymi komentarzami [Mencius with selected commentaries], translated by Małgorzata Religa (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Wydawniczy, 2021).

⁷⁹E.g. Jerzy Bańczerowski, "Distinktive Morpheme im Chinesischen," *Bulletin Fonograficzny* 8 (1967), 3–11.

⁷⁹Her most important works are: *Obrzędowy teatr Dalekiego Wschodu* [Ritual theater of the Far East] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1999); *Teatr niepokorny* [Unbowed theater] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2003); *Gao Xingjian's Idea of Theatre: From the Word to the Image* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

elections were held in Poland, leading to the fall of Communism, while in China, the authorities decided to brutally suppress the protests in Tiananmen Square. In Poland, which had finally freed itself from the grip of Communism, those events have been for decades a main obstacle in seeing China in a positive light. Even more reluctant was the Chinese attitude to Poland. After the leftist post-communist party came to power in 1993, the two countries resumed bilateral relations, but the reluctant media and public opinion waited in vain for a democratic upheaval in China. In 2008, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk was the first European leader to announce a boycott of the Beijing Olympics, citing human rights abuses in Tibet as the reason. Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski described China as a rising power with a non-democratic political system and declared that Poland wants to strengthen relations with Japan and India, “proven non-European democracies.”⁸⁰ In 2011, though, a “strategic cooperation” agreement was signed, which in 2016 gained an additional adjective, becoming a “comprehensive strategic partnership.” Polish–Chinese relations have since become friendlier and more intense. The Polish media began to portray China as a new superpower, which, among other things, sparked interest in the Chinese language. On the wave of this interest, many universities decided to launch studies offering Chinese language courses. The third Sinology unit in Poland was established in eastern Poland, at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in 2012. The founder of the unit was Professor Roman Śląwiński (1931–2014), a recognized specialist in the history of China and Taiwan.⁸¹ Śląwiński went to China in 1951 to study and met there his wife Hu Peifang, who returned with him to Poland and later, under the name Irena Śląwińska, became a translator of Chinese literature and a popularizer of knowledge about China in the Polish media. From 1955 to 1981 he worked at the Department of Sinology of the University of Warsaw, and then until 1993 at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Śląwiński was mainly interested in the history of China, but at the turn of the twenty-first century he established cooperation with the Taiwanese Academia Sinica and his scholarly interests focused on the history, religion, beliefs, and customs of the Republic of China. He also engaged in the study of Confucianism, to which his last edited book was devoted.⁸² After his death, Katarzyna Pejda, who specializes in Confucianism and is the author of a new and very well-received translation of the Analects of Confucius,⁸³ took charge of the unit.

Another Sinology department was established at the University of Gdańsk in 2013 at Institute of Russian and Eastern Studies, which offers education at the bachelor’s level. The unit works closely with the Confucius Institute present at the University of Gdańsk since 2015. Dr Wu Lan, a Chinese Polonist and translator of Polish literature, participated in the opening of the unit, becoming its first head and holding the position until September 2021.

⁸⁰Radosław Sikorski, “Informacja ministra spraw zagranicznych o założeniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2008” [Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the goals of Polish Foreign Policy in 2008], <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata6.nsf/main/20C4290E> (accessed November 16, 2021).

⁸¹Biography of Roman Śląwiński and links to bibliography in Lidia Kasarełło, “Wspomnienie o profesorze Marii Romanie Śląwińskim” [A memoir of Professor Maria Roman Śląwiński], *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 9.63 (2015), 13–19.

⁸²Konfucjanizm i jego wczesne interpretacje (Confucianism and its early interpretations), edited by Roman Śląwiński (Warsaw: CBKW IKSiO PAN, 2013).

⁸³Konfucjusz, *Analekta* [The Analectcs], translated and edited by Katarzyna Pejda (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2018).

Linguist Ewa Zajdler, a student of Künstler, after many years of working at the University of Warsaw, moved to Jagiellonian University in 2014 to establish Sinology at the Institute of Oriental Studies. Within a few years of its activity, Kraków Sinology has gained a reputation as a center where a great deal of emphasis is put on the practical study of Chinese (simplified and traditional characters, translation and interpretation, business and legal language), supported by solid knowledge of classical Chinese, literature, and history. As far as the academic work is concerned, Kraków Sinologists focus mostly on linguistics and modern literature research and translation. The youngest center of Polish Sinology is at the University of Wrocław, founded in 2019. The unit cooperates with the local Confucius Institute in terms of teaching staff and scholarships to China.⁸⁴

Apart from 'classical' Sinologies—courses teaching mainly Chinese and supplementing the curriculum with literature, history, and culture—many institutions in Poland over the last dozen or so years have been established offering Asian studies or philology of European languages combined with Chinese. One of the first initiatives of this kind was initiated at the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities (currently SWPS University of Humanities and Social Sciences) by Krzysztof Gawlikowski (1940–2021), a Sinologist and expert in Chinese strategic studies, whose early work was published in Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*.⁸⁵ In 2003, Gawlikowski founded the Centre for East Asian Civilisations there, which has over time evolved into the Department of Asian Studies. The Head of Asian Studies (there are three tracks: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) is currently Marcin Jacoby, who combines his interests in literary studies with experience in public diplomacy and promotion of Polish culture in Asia.⁸⁶ The Department of East Asia was established in 2005 at the Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Łódź.⁸⁷ It employs Dominik Mierzejewski who specializes in the field of Chinese foreign policy in regional perspective, and political and economic development of contemporary China.⁸⁸ The cultural studies profile is distinguished by the Culture of the Far East at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, established in 2016. The unit is headed by Maciej Szatkowski, a Sinologist specializing in Chinese theater; its team also includes researchers specializing in East Asian regional studies, as well as in Taiwan studies.

Researchers in the fields of political science, international relations, or Chinese society are found not only in Sinology. Jan Rowiński (b. 1936), one of the group studying in China in the 1950s, worked at the think-tank Polish Institute of International Affairs, at

⁸⁴ Article on the website of the University of Wrocław *New Confucius Institute headquarters*, 11 May 2018, <https://uni.wroc.pl/nova-siedziba-na-dziesieciolecie-institutu-konfucjusza/>.

⁸⁵ Krzysztof Gawlikowski, "Chinese Literature on the Art of War" (ch. 1) and "Distinctive Features of Chinese Military Thought" (ch.2), in *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 5, part VI, Military Technology: Missiles and Sieges, Joseph Needham and Robin D.S. Yates (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10–100.

⁸⁶ From 2008 to 2017 he headed the Asia Project at the Adam Mickiewicz Institute; his most recent publication is: *Sztuka perswazji w starożytnych Chinach: Opowiadka alegoryczna w okresie Walczących Państw (453–221 r. p.n.e.)* [The art of persuasion in Ancient China: Parabolic narrative of the Warring States Period (453–221 B.C.E.)] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2018).

⁸⁷ Łódź is a partner city of Chengdu, an end point of the railway line connecting China with Europe and a center of intensive cooperation with China at the local government level, which is largely due to work of the staff of the East Asia Department.

⁸⁸ His major publications include *China's Provinces and the Belt and Road Initiative* (London: Routledge, 2021); *Between Pragmatism and Confucian Morality: the De-ideologization of Chinese Foreign Policy Rhetoric during the Reform Period* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2013).

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and at the Polish Embassy in Beijing, and conducted research in the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science of the University of Warsaw. Rowiński's main works covered recent Chinese history, diplomacy, international relations in Asia, and Polish–Chinese relations.⁸⁹ One of the best-known and most active Polish political scientists at present is Bogdan Góralczyk, former diplomat and director of the European Centre at the University of Warsaw. Góralczyk is the author of almost thirty books and over three hundred articles on China, Myanmar, and Hungary, and frequently appears in the media as an expert.⁹⁰ There were also scholars working on China at the Polish Academy of Sciences at the Institute of Political Studies, e.g. Waldemar Dziak (1952–2019) and Jerzy Bayer (b. 1952). Two important think-tanks that regularly publish analyses and articles on Polish–Chinese relations are the Polish Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for Eastern Studies.⁹¹

Apart from the aforementioned centers, Chinese as a major or as an additional subject is currently offered by many other universities in Poland, both public and private. Some of the new units have chosen an option more akin to Chinese Studies and put emphasis on contemporary China in political, social, or cultural terms, while others add Chinese as a second language to English, German, or Russian philology, or with economics or business studies.

It is also worth mentioning that the last twenty years have seen a growing number of direct translations of Chinese contemporary literature into Polish. The authors published in Poland include Mo Yan, Yan Lianke, Yu Hua, Wang Xiaobo, Zhang Wei, and Chi Zijian. The translators belong to the younger generations of Polish Sinologists, with Joanna Krenz, Katarzyna Kulpa, Katarzyna Sarek, and Agnieszka Walulik among others.

Conclusion

The history of Polish Sinology reflects the history of Poland's contacts with China—a late start in comparison with other European countries, centuries of learning mainly through intermediaries, and, to put it bluntly, a negligible importance both at home and abroad. Polish Sinology has not created trends or “schools,” the main reason being the small number of Sinologists. Quantitative changes have occurred in the last dozen years or so, when Chinese as a field of study appeared at many state and private universities. On the wave of China's rise, a significant increase in the number of Sinologists working at Polish universities allows us to look with hope to the future of Polish Sinology and to its growing presence in world Sinology.

Conflicts of Interest. The author declares none.

⁸⁹His major publications are *Z zagadnięć polityki zagranicznej Chin*, 2 vols. [On China's foreign policy] (Warsaw: PISM, 1989); *Chiny a Stolica Apostolska: stosunki wzajemne i ich międzynarodowe implikacje* [China and the Holy See: mutual relations and their international implications] (Warsaw: PISM, 1991); *Chiny—Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w latach 1989–1993* [China and Eastern-Europe in 1989–1993] (Warsaw: PISM, 1994).

⁹⁰His most recent books are *Nowy długий marsz. Chiny ery Xi Jinpinga* [The new Long March. China of the Xi Jinping era] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2021); *Wielki Renesans—Chińska transformacja i jej konsekwencje* [The Grand Renaissance—China's transformation and its consequences] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2018).

⁹¹List of publications at www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje?text=&f%5B0%5D=obszary%3A395.