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Mongolian and Manchu Studies in Poland

Abstract

Paper describes development of Mongolian and Manchu Studies in Poland starting with the activities of Jan Potocki, Ignacy Wojciechowski and Józef Kowalewski. It depicts works of Marian Lewicki and Stanisław Kałużyński as well as of modern scholars, such as Byambaa Ragchaa, Agata Bareja-Starzyńska, Jan Rogala and Jerzy Tulisow.

Keywords: Mongolian Studies, Manchu Studies, Kowalewski, Kałużyński, Lewicki, Kotwicz

Talking about the achievements of Mongolists and Manchurists in one paper might seem a bit strange, because in the world Manchu studies are often associated with Sinology. I do not follow this trend here, because, firstly, the Manchu language is much closer to Mongolian than to Chinese, and secondly, in Poland Manchu studies are covered by Mongolists.

Currently, both disciplines are being developed in Poland at the University of Warsaw, in a special department, established in the 1950s. Their beginnings, however, are much older. Not going back as far as the time of the battle of Legnica, when there was a big interest in Mongolia among the Poles, we may say that the tradition of Polish research on the Mongols and the Manchus goes back to the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. It was started by two people: Count Jan Potocki and Ignacy Wojciechowski.

Potocki – we know: the author of *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* and a globetrotter who travelled the world from Morocco to Mongolia.¹ His *Journey to the*

¹ A. Brückner, *Jana hr. Potockiego prace i zasługi naukowe*, Warszawa 1921.

*Steppes of Astrakhan*² may still arouse interest today, especially among the scholars of Kalmyk studies. Wojciechowski,³ on the other hand, is less known. We know that he was born in 1793 in a Polish family – concluding from his surname – and that he was a doctor – between 1820 and 1838 we meet him as a physician of the Russian Orthodox Mission in Beijing. That is where, most probably, he learnt Manchu and Chinese. He mastered these languages so well, that later on (1844–1850) he could teach them at the University of Kazan. Unfortunately, he did not leave any written works. He allegedly did work on some compendiums of the above-mentioned languages, as well as the Chinese-Manchu-Russian lexicon, but according to my knowledge, none of them was ever published.

The biography of Wojciechowski is all the more interesting, as it intertwines with the life of Józef Kowalewski. And his life was much complicated indeed. Before becoming “the father of Mongolian studies”, Kowalewski was a classical philologist.⁴ The requirement for him to deal with the exotic eastern languages was a form of repression he suffered for being a member of the Philomaths Association. Initially, he studied in Kazan and subsequently in Transbaikalia, where he learnt the basics of Mongolian. In order to master the language better, he went via Mongolia to China and met Wojciechowski in Beijing. It seems that the doctor, who had already spent many years in China, was of great help to him, also with the Manchu language. Altogether Kowalewski spent five years in the East. In 1833 he went to Petersburg, passed his exams, and became professor of Mongolian at the University of Kazan. And thus, when years later Wojciechowski came to town, Kowalewski was already in his eleventh year of work at the university.

Wojciechowski died in 1850 in Kazan, and Kowalewski moved to Warsaw in 1863. At that time he was already a renowned scholar. He gained the greatest acclaim for his three-volume Mongolian language dictionary,⁵ containing, besides French equivalents, numerous Manchu, Sanskrit and Tibetan parallels – for many reasons an invaluable book even today. It might have been expected that along with the appearance of such a luminary, Warsaw would become an important centre of Mongolian studies. Unfortunately, that did not happen. The program of studies in the [Main School] Szkoła Główna – where Kowalewski was employed – did not cover Oriental studies and the outbreak and subsequent failure of the January Uprising were not helpful for a fruitful academic work. What is worse, during the Uprising Kowalewski lost a major part of his archives. This resulted in his final farewell to Oriental studies, after which he devoted himself – with not much conviction, though – to teaching history.

² J. Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, Paris 1829.

³ R.M. Valeev, *Kazanskoe vostokovedenie: istoki i razvitie (XIX v.–20 gg. XX v.)*, Izdatel'stvo Kazanskogo Universiteta, Kazan 1998, p. 149; P.E. Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniya*, Moskva 1977, pp. 195–197.

⁴ See W. Kotwicz, *Józef Kowalewski orientalista (1801–1878)*, Prace Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, Seria A, nr 11, Wrocław, 1948. Also: Szamow, G.F., *Profressor O.M. Kowalewskij. Ocherk zhizni i nauchnoi deatel'nosti'*, Izdatel'stvo Kazanskogo Universiteta, Kazań, 1983; S. Kałużyński, “Kowalewski Józef Szczepan (1801–1878)”. In: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, PAN, Państwowy Zakład im. Ossolińskich, 1969, pp. 525–528; *Mongoloved O.M. Kovalevskij: biografija i nasledije (1801–1878)*, R.M. Valeev (ed.), Kazan' 2004, especially J. Tulisow and R.M. Valeev, “Osnovnye etapy zhizni O.M. Kovalevskogo: Vil'nus, Kazan', Varshava”, pp. 95–138.

⁵ J. Kowalewski, *Dictionnaire Mongol-Russe-Français*, Kasan, 1844.

Does that mean that Kowalewski's stay in Warsaw was a lost time for Oriental studies? Well, not necessarily, because, although Kowalewski himself did not act as an expert of the East, the word of his adventures spread around, here and there arousing the already existing interest in the Orient. Who knows if the inexplicable decision of young Kotwicz to follow the Oriental studies was not influenced by some stories about Kowalewski? That might have been the case, particularly because both men came from the same circle of minor gentry of the eastern borders.

Anyway, Władysław Kotwicz,⁶ already as a school student must have been dreaming of studying eastern languages, and precisely those in which Kowalewski had specialized before. He made his dream come true when he enrolled in 1891 to the Petersburg University's Faculty of Eastern Languages. Among the languages taught there were also Chinese and Japanese, but Kotwicz focused on Mongolian and Manchu. At the time of his graduation (1895) his career developed in two directions: in 1896 Kotwicz took up job in the Ministry of Finance, and a little later in his parent university. He conducted classes in two chairs: of Mongolian and of Manchu languages, and soon became their director. As for his scholarly interests, at that time they focused on the language and folklore of the Kalmucks. It is worth emphasizing that it was Kotwicz who contributed to the publishing of the Kalmyks' national epic, *The Jangar*, and wrote the first grammar of the Kalmyk language. The change of interests came in 1912 with a journey to Mongolia. It resulted in the discovery of previously unknown inscriptions and archeological monuments and, more than before, made Kotwicz inclined to history and historic linguistics.

Many of valuable materials brought from that journey and others, collected during Kotwicz's whole lifetime, including never published texts, are stored in the Kotwicz collection in the Archive of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow under call number K-III-19, archival units 55-134.⁷

After he left from the Ministry of Finance (1917), Kotwicz's academic career gained momentum. In the same year – 1917 – he became a full-time docent, in 1923 – a professor, and in 1924 – correspondent member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. However, in 1924 he was no longer in Russia. When, after the First World War, the independent Poland was re-established, Kotwicz began his attempts to be repatriated and in 1923 he succeeded.

In Poland two universities tried to have him: Jagiellonian University and the University of Jan Kazimierz in Lvov. Kotwicz chose Lvov. There, he took control of the Chair of the Far-Eastern Philologies, established especially for him. He taught Mongolian and Manchu, as well as history, with special emphasis on the history of nomads. He continued to do so almost throughout the whole between-wars period (1924–1939). When the Second World War broke out, he moved to the area of Vilnius. He died there on October 3rd, 1944.

⁶ M. Lewicki, *Władysław Kotwicz (20.II.1872–3.X.1944)*, Wrocław, 1948; J. Tulisow, "Władysław Kotwicz", *Hemispheres*, 1986, No 2, pp. 199–215; J. Tulisow, "At the Source of Vilnius Altaic Studies", *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia*, 2009, vol. 10, Issues 1-2, ed. by Andrius Beinorius and Marek Mejer, Vilnius 2011, pp. 97–110.

⁷ J. Tulisow, "Władysław Kotwicz", *Hemispheres*, 1986, No 2.

Kotwicz left an impressive output. Apart from the above-mentioned works, it contains editions of texts, works on the history of the steppe peoples, biographies of Polish Orientalists, articles devoted to different linguistic problems, as well the posthumously published opus magnum: *Studies on Altaic languages*. It is interesting that this heritage does not contain almost any strictly Manchurist works. However, we know that Kotwicz did not stop at just teaching the Manchu language, he also collected texts written in Manchu and encouraged his students to study it. For example, he induced Muromski to collect materials in the Sibe dialect.⁸

And one more thing – when speaking about the scholarly output of Kotwicz, we have to take into account the works which, for various reasons, were never published by the author, but kept in his archives. Some of them, like *Studia nad językami altajskimi* [*Studies on Altaic languages*],⁹ were published after his death, others still await publication. Among the latter there is the article *La langue mandchoue et sa lexicographie*. Although it has on its front page the words “Do not print!”, handwritten by Kotwicz, perhaps this ban is no longer valid today?

Kotwicz had many students, often outstanding, who in time also made academic careers. Among the listeners to his Lvov lectures, this concerns two people: the Ukrainian historian (who later worked in the USA) O. Pritsak, and the Polish Mongolist M. Lewicki.¹⁰ Here we are more interested in the latter. He had a versatile education (studied also under P. Pelliot), he easily dealt with various topics, but gained fame for his studies of the Middle Mongolian language¹¹ and commentaries to Marco Polo’s *Description of the World*.¹² Had he lived longer, most probably he would have also had his contribution to Manchu studies. The author of this paper had in his hand a certain Manchu text transcribed by M. Lewicki.

After the war M. Lewicki divided his time between Cracow, where he lived, and Warsaw and Wrocław. At the University of Wrocław he was a guest lecturer (at the Philology Faculty) and in Warsaw he did his habilitation (1949) and took control of the Chair of the Philology of the Inner Asian Peoples, established (1950) on the basis of the Indian Philology Seminar of the Institute of Oriental Studies. In 1951 he employed in his Chair Stanisław Kałużyński¹³ who had just (1951) received his M.A. diploma in Wrocław. At that time Kałużyński’s specialization was Turkology, but under the influence of Lewicki, it was soon overshadowed by Mongolian Studies. Kałużyński (from 1964 head of the Chair of the Philology of the Inner Asian Peoples, and from 1979 full professor),

⁸ Edited later by S. Kałużyński, see *infra*, note 19.

⁹ In *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XVI, 1958.

¹⁰ S. Kałużyński, “Marian Lewicki (15 VIII 1908–13 XI 1966)”, *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, 1956, No. 3 (19), pp. 299–312; an entry in the “Polish Biographical Dictionary” t. XVII, 1972 and “Marian Lewicki (na 25-lecie śmierci)”, *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, 1980, no 4.

¹¹ *La langue Mongole des transcriptions chinoises du XIVe siècle. Le Houa-yi yi-yu de 1389*, Wrocław 1949.

¹² *Opisanie świata* [Description of the World], Warszawa 1954, 1975, 2010.

¹³ See *Opera altaistica professori Stanislawo Kałużyńskim octogenario dicata*, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, vol. LVIII, No. 1, ed. by Agata Bareja-Starzyńska, Jerzy Tulisow, with the assistance of Jan Rogala, Warszawa 2005 with the bibliography by Jerzy Tulisow, pp. 9–12 and the complete bibliography of Prof. Kałużyński, pp. 15–32.

is the author of the Classical Mongolian language grammar,¹⁴ a brilliant translation of the *Secret History of the Mongols*¹⁵ and many other valuable works on the history and culture of Mongolia. At least partially devoted to Mongolian studies are also his other works, like *Mongolische Elemente in der Jakutische Sprache* (PWN, Warszawa, 1961).

Kałużyński's Manchurist works deserve a separate mention. There are more than a dozen of them. Apart from one – the translation of Manchu maxims in the anthology *Voices from the Yurt*¹⁶ – they concern the Sibe people and their language, which is in fact a Manchu dialect. I already mentioned it when I talked about the Manchu interests of Kotwicz. Works of Kałużyński are based precisely on the materials of Kotwicz, and in particular on those given to him by Muromski. By publishing them,¹⁷ Kałużyński gave a strong impulse to start new research of the so far rather neglected Manchu language.

In 1997 Professor Kałużyński was replaced as head of the Chair by Professor Godziński.¹⁸ This scholar specializes in the studies of Mongolian language. Even though, as a student of Kałużyński, he also possesses deep knowledge of other Altaic languages, yet he was never interested in researching them. Instead, he is successful in the field of Tibetan studies. We might even say that he is a pioneer in this discipline in Poland.

Others have already spoken about Godziński's achievements as a Tibetologist.¹⁹ I will focus on his Mongolist works. There is no doubt, that one of the most important is the monograph on the Middle Mongolian language: *Język średniomongolski: słowotwórstwo, odmiana wyrazów, składnia* [The Middle Mongolian Language: Word Formation, Morphology, Syntax], (Rozprawy Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, 1985) – his habilitation dissertation – and the book *Modern Mongolian Language*.²⁰ These works, along with the articles on Mongolian affixes and scripts used by the Mongols in different epochs, established Godziński's reputation as a linguist. However, a true Mongolist does not limit himself to linguistic problems only. Thus, Godziński also authored an article on Mongolian art,²¹ an exemplary publication of Dagur/Daur fairy tales from the collection of Kotwicz,²² and a popular publication *In the Circle of Lamaist Legends and Myths*.²³

¹⁴ Klasyczny język mongolski, [Classical Mongolian Language], Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa 1998.

¹⁵ *Tajna historia Mongołów*, [The Secret History of the Mongols], PIW, Warszawa 1970, 1989, 2005.

¹⁶ Głosy z jurty [Voices from a Yurt], Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1960.

¹⁷ Kałużyński S., *Die Sprache des mandschurischen Stammes Sibe aus der Gegend von Kuldsha*, PWN, Warszawa 1977.

¹⁸ See "Altaica et Tibetica. Anniversary Volume dedicated to Stanisław Godziński on His Seventieth Birthday", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, vol. 63 (1), 2010. Biography on pages 13–15.

¹⁹ J. Rogala, „Stanisław Godziński”. In: "Altaica et Tibetica. Anniversary Volume dedicated to Stanisław Godziński on His Seventieth Birthday", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, vol. 63 (1), 2010, pp. 14–15.

²⁰ Współczesny język mongolski, [Modern Mongolian Language], Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa 1998.

²¹ „Sztuka mongolska” [The Mongolian Art], *Etnografia polska*, 24, 1980.

²² „Deux contes dagours de la région de Kouldja...” in: *Mongolian Studies*, Budapest 1970.

²³ *W kręgu lamajskich legend i mitów*, [In the Circle of the Lamaist Legends and Myths], Iskry, Warszawa, 1981.

This scholar also gave us the translation of *The History of Mongolia* by the Mongolian publicist Baabar.²⁴

In 2003 Godziński quit his post as head of the Chair and in the same year was replaced by Dr Agata Bareja-Starzyńska. She is a graduate of Mongolian studies, but studied also Tibetan and Sanskrit, and took part in the Buddhology seminar. During her studies she had a language practice in Ulan Bator (1986–1987) and an internship in Budapest (1988). As an assistant in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw, she had scholarships at the universities in Oslo (1993), Bonn (1996) and, as part of the university exchange, in Bloomington (2000). In 1999 she defended her Ph.D. dissertation on *Čikula Kereglegči*, a Mongolian handbook of Buddhism.²⁵ The main sphere of interest of Dr Bareja-Starzyńska is Buddhism in Mongolia, Mongolian-Tibetan relations, as well as literatures of Mongolia and Tibet.²⁶

When talking about the research on Mongolian Buddhism carried out in Warsaw, we cannot omit R. Byambaa, who is employed as a language teacher. This former member of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and the director of Gandan monastery's library, has for many years studied Mongolian writings in Tibetan language and published several works devoted to this topic.²⁷

As for other employees in the Chair, we may say that Mongolists are also Dr Jan Rogala and Dr Jerzy Tulisow. The former specializes in contemporary Mongolia and in linguistics. His Ph.D. dissertation was entitled *The Verb Word Formation in Modern Mongolian Language*.²⁸ The latter published a work devoted to the language of the *Secret*

²⁴ *Dzieje Mongolii*, [History of Mongolia], Wydawnictwo Akademickie, Dialog, Warszawa 2005.

²⁵ *Chikula kereglegchi. Zasady buddyzmu*, [Chikula kereglegchi. Buddhist Principles] by Shiregetü Gütüushi Chorji, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2006.

²⁶ „The History of Ancient Tibet According to the 17th Century Mongolian Chronicle ‘Erdeni-yin tobči’ by Sagang Sečen”. In: *Proceedings of the 5th International Seminar on Tibetan Studies in Narita, Japan 1989*, Narita 1992, pp. 341–351; A. Bareja-Starzyńska, H. Havnevik, “A Preliminary Study of Buddhism in Present-day Mongolia”. In: *Mongolians from country to city. Floating boundaries, pastoralism, and city life in the Mongol lands*, Kopenhaga, 2006, NIAS (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies), pp. 212–236; “The Growth of the Religious Authority of the First Jebtsundampa of Mongolia (1635–1723)”. In: *Biographies of Eminent Mongol Buddhists, PIATS 2006: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 11th International Seminar on Tibetan Studies in Königswinter 2006*, Johan Elverskog (ed.), International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH: IITBS Halle (2008), pp. 49–57; “The Mongolian Incarnation of Jo nang pa Taranātha Kun dga’ snying po : Öndör Geegen Zanabazar Blo bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (1635–1723). A case study of the Tibeto-Mongolian Relationship”. In: *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, Held at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, September 2009 on the Occasion of the ‘Thank you India’ Year*, Roberto Vitali (ed.), “The Tibet Journal”, Autumn 2009–Summer 2010, vol. XXXIV–XXXV, s. 243–261.

²⁷ *The Square Script of Zanabazar* (1997, new ed. 2005), *Biographical Guide of Mongolian Writers in the Tibetan Language and Mongolian Translators*, vols. I–III, 2003–2004; Reedition of the Collected Works of eminent Mongolian Buddhist Masters including *The Collected Biographies of Jebzundampa Khutugtus of Khalkha*, Ulaan Baatar 2006.

²⁸ *Słowotwórstwo czasownika współczesnego języka mongolskiego – derywacja i kompozycja*, [The Verb Word Formation in Modern Mongolian Language – Derivation and Composition, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2007.

*History of the Mongols*²⁹ and several translations of Mongolian poetry.³⁰ Later, however, he gave up Mongolian studies in order to focus on the culture of peoples living near the borders of Mongolia, the history of the steppes and Manchu studies. He wrote, among other things, a grammar of Manchu³¹ and a handbook of this language,³² as well as two books about the folklore of the Tungusic people,³³ including the Manchu and the Sibe. It is worth stressing that under his direction already two M.A. theses devoted to Manchu studies have been written, so there is hope that this discipline will be developed in Poland.

²⁹ *Terminologia kultury materialnej w 'Tajnej historii Mongołów'*, "Acta Philologica" nr 5 (r. 1972), pp. 153–195.

³⁰ *Aforyzmy mongolskie*, przekład z mongolskiego, „Przegląd Orientalistyczny” nr 86 (r. 1973), pp. 114, 120; C. Damdinsuren, *Tol Genden*, przekład z mongolskiego, „Przegląd Orientalistyczny” nr 129–132 (r. 1983), pp. 107–115; D. Nacagdordż, *Mój kraj*, przekład z mongolskiego, „Przegląd Orientalistyczny” nr 141 (r. 1986), pp. 83–85.

³¹ *Język mandżurski* [The Manchu Language], Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa 2000.

³² *Krótki kurs języka mandżurskiego*, [A short Course of the Manchu Language] Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa 2004.

³³ *Legends of the Manchu Peoples*, [Legends of the Manchu Peoples], vol. I and vol. II, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa, 1997, 1998; *Folklor ludów tunguskich*, [Folklore of the Tungusic Peoples] Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa 2009.