Oral History of China Scholars in Poland – Final Report

“Oral History of China Scholars in Poland”
forms part of the study
“Comparative Epistemology of China Studies: The Oral History Approach”
sponsored by National Taiwan University,
and directed by Prof. SHIH Chih-yu,
Department of Political Science, NTU, Taipei, Taiwan

Agreement between Prof. SHIH Chih-yu and dr Marcin Jacoby to conduct the research was signed respectively on 24th June and 1st July 2011. NTU remitted 6,000 USD to dr Jacoby to cover the costs of the research. Until this 30th June 2013 the whole amount (6,000 USD) has been spent, as shown on the “Expenditures accounting sheet”. The expenditures in the years 2011–2012 amounting to 3812.67 USD have already been reported in December 2012, and all relevant documents provided. The expenditures for 2013 (1st January to 30th June 2013) amount to 2187.33 USD. This gives a combined total of 6,000 USD, equal to the sum remitted by NTU in 2011. All accounting documents for expenses between 1st January and 30th June 2013 are provided herewith.

Between the 1st of January 2013 and today, the following has been done:

1. Interviews conducted between 2011 and 2012 were sent to interviewees for acceptance. Additional meetings, consultations and corrections followed. Some interviewees demanded several meetings (the highest number was 6 meetings with one interlocutor), some preferred editing the texts themselves and consulting over the phone or through e-mail. Usually, the process of working on an interview required from two to 6 months of continuous contacts. By the end of June all interviews conducted between 2011–2012 have been successfully corrected, and their final versions accepted by all interviewees for diffusion/publication.

2. Two new interviews have been successfully conducted (in Polish) with the following persons: Ms A. Łobacz, Mr. B. Dąbrowski. Polish-language transcripts of the interviews have been made, and both interviews were translated into English. Additional meetings and editing were also required for these two interviews.

To sum up, for the whole period of the Project, nine interviews were successfully conducted, translated into English and accepted by interviewees for diffusion/publication.

The list of interviews:

1. Ms Teresa Lechowska
2. Ms Marzenna Szenk-Illiewa  
3. Prof. Krzysztof Gawlikowski  
4. Prof. Jan Rowiński  
5. Amb. Zdzisław Góralczyk  
6. Mr. Stanisław Tworzydło  
7. Ms Irena Ślawińska (Hu Peifang)  
8. Ms Agnieszka Łobacz  
9. Mr. Bogumił Dąbrowski

The persons interviewed form a varied group of individuals representing all facets of Chinese studies in Poland in the 1950s and 1960s. Ms Lechowska was the 1st year student of the Sinology Department of the University of Warsaw after WW2, Ms Szlenk and Ms Łobacz represent Sinology Department graduates, but also first scholarship recipients to China from within the Sinology circles. Mr. Dąbrowki was in the very first group of four students going on full-university scholarship to China in 1950. Prof. Rowiński, Amb. Góralczyk, Mr. Tworzydło and Prof. Gawlikowski represent different years and different programmes of full-university Chinese scholarship recipients, and prof. Gawlikowski was also the last recipient of Government scholarships to China in the period 1950–1966. Ms Ślawińska (originally Hu Peifang) came to Poland as wife of another of the Chinese scholarship recipients, the first such a pair in Poland.

In their later life, the interviewees also showed a great variety of careers: translators and interpreters (Ms Lechowska, Ms Szlenk, Ms Łobacz, Ms Ślawińska), diplomats (Amb. Góralczyk, Mr. Dąbrowski, Ms Łobacz, Prof. Rowiński), researchers and analysts (Prof. Rowiński, Prof. Gawlikowski), artists (Mr. Tworzydło).

I believe that such a choice of interviewees enables thorough and many-sided analyses of different aspects on Sinology and Chinese Studies in Poland in the 1950s and 1960s, basing on the interviews.

Several persons refused taking part in the Project:
1. Prof. Roman Maria Ślawiński – a 1st year full-university Chinese scholarship recipient (1950), later a notable Polish Sinologue, very active scholar  
2. Dr Genowefa Zduń – also a 1st year full-university Chinese scholarship recipient (1950), later a lecturer at the Sinology Department of the University of Warsaw  
3. Dr Jerzy Sie-Grabowski – a scholar and interpreter of Polish-Chinese descent, moving from China to Poland in the 1950s, and working since then at the Sinology Department of the University of Warsaw
4. Ambassador Ksawery Burski – full-university Chinese scholarship recipient in the 1950s, later a Sinologue, diplomat, Polish Ambassador to China.

Two other potential candidates for interviews were considered, but not contacted due to their advanced age and health problems.

With this it seems that the Project is complete, as no other valuable interviews with key senior Chinese scholars in Poland can be conducted.

The following persons were involved in the Project:

1. Dr Marcin Jacoby – conducting all interviews, establishing and maintaining contacts with all interviewees, correcting all interviews
2. Dr Ewa Paśnik – involved in four first interviews as Project co-supervisor, translator of two interviews
3. Ms Katarzyna Sarek – translator and author of transcripts for all remaining interviews

dr Marcin Jacoby
Project supervisor

Warsaw, 30th June 2013