

## KONFERENZEN

### Konferenzbeiträge

#### Asian studies in Europe with special emphasis on the state-of-the-art in Germany

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When I was asked to speak on the state of the arts of Asian Studies in Europe at an occasion like this one here I felt honoured but, at the same time, very uneasy. Asian Studies? All of Europe? And this in twenty minutes? - I can assure you it was due to my naiveté rather than to any ambitions that I finally accepted. Doing justice to the great variety of Asian Studies in so many different countries would be impossible; the only thing one can do, indeed, is to concentrate on some issues, that one considers important. But even this has to be done in a rather simplistic manner, holzschnittartig, as we Germans say. Therefore, please, consider this contribution in the first place as an attempt to depict some trends in Asian Studies in Europe mainly as a kind of contrast to Asian Studies in other parts of the world: What are the distinctive features? What is different if compared with Asian Studies elsewhere? And, as a historian, do allow me to briefly look back for the reasons of these differences. Thereafter I want to relate some present day developments in the field of Asian Studies in Germany and other European countries.

I think the most distinct of all differences, if compared with the state of the arts in other parts of the world, is the length of the tradition of Asian Studies in Europe. If we include the Near East which was an essential part of orientalism, out of which Asian Studies developed, we could speak about a 350 year old tradition, taking into account, that chairs for Arabic Studies were created at Cambridge already in 1632 and in Oxford in 1636. But if we restrict our area to the world east of the Hindukush - and that is what I want to do - we still have a tradition of almost 200 years, considering the fact that our French colleagues at the INALCO, the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, are now actually preparing the 200 year celebrations of the foundation of the institute in 1795 in Paris.

European-Asiatic Societies were even older, but the regular teachings on Asian languages and cultures started in the early 19th century, with chairs for Indology in Paris in 1815, Bonn 1818 and Oxford 1833.

If you now say that I better concentrate on present-day developments, I will immediately follow your advice - but this little excursion into the past directly leads to our second distinct difference, namely that Asian Studies in Europe were - at least so it is maintained in a number of critical studies on orientalism - designed and practiced as part and parcel of colonial expansion. These attacks, for instance by Edward Said in his "Orientalism", published in 1978 in New York or by Asaf Hussain in his "Orientalism, Islam and Islamists" (Brattleboro, Vermont, 1984) are still part of Asian Studies in Europe and discussed. The latest reply that I know of is Charles Malamouds Critique et Critique de la critique de L'orientalisme, published in the White Book on the state of Asian Studies in

France earlier this year (*Livre Blanc de l'orientalisme Français*, ed. par le Société Asiatique, Paris 1993, pp. 87-91).

These attacks are well known and they are not only coming from outside, they are a part of the decolonization-process in the societies of former colonial powers. I think in most European countries we find these attempts to come to terms with one's own imperialist past, in particular among the younger generation, extremely critical of the negative aspects of colonial expansion. Being in Leiden, the one or the other among us might remember that even a great scholar with world fame in the field of oriental studies, Snouck Hurgronje, did not escape this fate of a critical re-evaluation, and was it 50 years after his death, in 1986. There were new enquiries into the motives of his visit to Mekka in 1885, into his role in the so-called pacification-campaign in Aceh, beginning 1898 and so on. These attempts to come to terms with one's own past are not unfounded attacks easily to be dismissed like some of the accusations of Said and Hussain, they are scholarly works. The young Dutch scholar van Koningsveld might have been biased when he wrote his critical articles about Snouck. But he knew his sources (cf. a collection of his articles in P.Sj. van Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje en de Islam*, Leiden 1987) and his editions of Snouck Hurgronjes correspondence with Nöldecke and Goldziher are important new contributions to this field.

I think it cannot be denied that Asian Studies in Europe aided colonialism and imperialism to no small degree. But the cooperation with colonial authorities is only one side of the medal: The other side, equally, if not more important, is the development of what came to be known as classical Indology, Sinology or Japanology in the various European countries. If there is a third specific characteristic of European Asian Studies it is the high quality of these philologies unparalleled up to the end of the colonial period and leaving deep imprints on Asian Studies in Europe thereafter.

Already in colonial times the results of this dedicated research were not only appreciated in academic Europe, but also by the emerging new elite in the various colonies. They quoted proudly from the texts of their own cultural tradition, edited by the Orientalists, for instance the texts of Vedic religion by Max Müller, the famous German Professor in Oxford. They pointed to the Temples in Angkor, Pagan, Borobudur, rediscovered and rebuilt by the French, the Dutch or the British as important monuments of their own cultural tradition and they spoke with pride about their glorious past, extolled by Krom, Stutterheim, by Coedes or by Gordon Luce, G.E. Harvey, or other British experts on Burmese history.

This shows how onesided, how misleading judgements could be which said "The motive of their study was not to produce knowledge for knowledges sake but to help the colonialists to exploit non-Western nations" (Asaf Hussain, loc. cit., p.10).

Another judgement of the philologist tradition seems to be much closer to the truth: "they saw in the most ancient past the manifestation of the greatest purity and perfection of language and religion. In fact the motivation for patient scholarship in this field was the desire to penetrate the veil of later decay and corruption so as to reach the fountainhead of original revelations" (D.Rothermund in his booklet "The German Intellectual Quest for India", New Delhi, 1986, p.53).

May be the efforts to reconstruct the purity of language and religion were exaggerated but this tradition, as you all know, survived well into the post World War II period, when new nations required new attention and when the American

Area Studies Programs showed the way how to go about it. This tradition of shunning rather than dealing with the new political developments in Asia lasted longest, if I am not mistaken, in countries with no colonial past in Asia, such as Germany or the Scandinavian countries. The British, the Dutch and the French, in spite - or should one say because of - their decolonization problems, followed the American example. After some hesitations here or there they transformed their former colonial institutes without great difficulties into Modern Asian Studies Centers.

These changes did not go unnoticed. But when a request was made by the German Science Council, to create something similar in Germany in the early 1960s - the result was that the 27 or so new professorships were practically all going into the traditional disciplines of the so-called "Orchideen-Fächer" in Germany (cf. Fritz Opitz, *Die Asienforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde* no. 41, Hamburg 1971). It was only in Heidelberg where a South-Asia-Institute was founded in the 1960s, which, from now on also focussed on modern developments. By the way, a Nordic Asian Studies Center was founded 1967 in Kopenhagen - both of them, Heidelberg und Kopenhagen, are now already celebrating their 25th anniversary of Modern Asian Studies. But they were in their countries the exception rather than the rule.

I am now coming to the second part of my talk: The situation of Asian Studies in Germany: What are its features today, where are the differences as compared with other parts of Europe.

The most important observation about the situation in Germany is that we do not have a concentration of Asian Studies in a few places - like in England at the SOAS or Hull, like Paris in France, like Leiden and Amsterdam in the Netherlands or like Kopenhagen in Scandinavia.

Heidelberg still has the potential of the 60s, but five of the 15 or so professorships in Asian Studies are presently vacant. This is perhaps a sad coincidence, but in one way or the other it is symptomatic of the unsatisfactory situation in Germany.

The state of affairs is: Up to 1990 we had about 30 German universities - out of a total of more than 100 universities - which were engaged in one or more subjects of Asian Studies. These universities were spread over all parts of Germany, from Kiel to Freiburg, from Hamburg to Passau, and from Trier to Berlin. The German reunification did not cause a major revision in our system. After the painful process of restructuring three more universities of the former DDR can be added to the list, in case Humboldt University in Berlin, and the Universities in Leipzig and Halle. In these 33 universities we find 23 Institutes of Sinology, the same number (20+3) - there are several new institutes, see below - are engaged in Japanese Studies, 17 institutes teach Indology and in 18 institutes we find some activities in Southeast Asian Studies.

13 universities have chairs for at least 3 of the major Asian regions. These are the universities in Berlin (2), Bochum, Bonn, Frankfurt, Freiburg, Göttingen, Hamburg, Heidelberg, Köln, Marburg, München and Tübingen. This sounds a lot, but if one counts the chairs in other countries with a concentration of Asian Studies in a few places there is not much difference.

## Asien-Institute an deutschen Universitäten (Stand: 1993)

	Sinologie	Indologie	Japanologie	SOA- Studien	Korea- nistik
Aachen	/	-	-	-	-
Berlin	FU	x	x	/	x
	HU	x	x	x	x
Bielefeld	-	-	-	x	-
Bochum	x	x	x	x	x
Bonn	x	x	x	/	x
Braunschweig	-	-	-	/	-
Bremen (Univ. + Hochsch.)	x	/	x	/	-
Düsseldorf	x	-	x	-	-
Duisburg	x	-	x	-	-
Erlangen	x	-	x	-	-
Frankfurt	x	x	x	x	-
Freiburg	x	x	x	-	-
Gießen	-	-	-	/	-
Göttingen	x	x	x	/	-
Hagen	-	-	/	-	-
Halle	-	x	x	-	-
Hamburg	x	x	x	x	x
Hannover	-	-	/	-	-
Heidelberg	x	x	x	/	-
Jena	-	-	-	/	-
Kassel	-	-	-	/	-
Kiel	x	x	-	-	-
Köln	x	x	x	/	-
Leipzig	x	x	-	-	-
Mainz	x	x	-	/	-
Marburg	x	x	x	-	-
München	x	x	x	/	x
Münster	x	-	/	-	-
Passau	/	-	-	x	-
Potsdam	/	-	/	-	-
Saarland	/	-	-	-	-
Trier	x	-	x	-	-
Tübingen	x	x	x	-	x
Würzburg	x	-	x	-	-
.....					
Wien	x	x	x	-	x
Zürich	x	x	x	-	-

/ = partiell vertreten

x = voll vertreten

- = nicht vertreten

Quelle: Zeitschrift ASIEN, Angaben über asienkundliche Veranstaltungen 1992 und 1993

The major reason for this dispersion is the cultural autonomy of the various German states; the Federal State does finance some research activities via the German Research Association (DFG), but the universities are paid by the Länder like Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and so on, and they, of course, support mainly studies which they consider necessary for the needs of their "Land". A German Association of Asian Studies tries to provide some coordination. Under its 'umbrella' are scientific councils on South- and Southeast Asia, on Japan and Korea, and on China. The Association further provides a forum in the form of the journal ASIEN, a quarterly. One of the distinctive features of this journal

ASIEN is the publication of the teaching program of all German institutes engaged in Asian studies twice a year, per semester. The scientific advisory councils are supposed to arrange colloquia about their respective areas at least for the biannual national conventions of the Association, but more could be done in this respect. An encouraging sign is the annual voluntary gathering of young scholars of a regional specialization from all over Germany, for instance the regular meeting of 80 to 100 young Southeast Asianists. The established scholars prefer their national or international professional associations. There is little interest for "interregional" cooperation! The Indologists know little about the Japanologists and so on. Because of this it is not easy to present a complete picture of the state of the art of Asian Studies in Germany. There might always be some activity going on somewhere, of which the compiler and his informants are not aware. The best source of information is still the well known Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg with its documentation- and publication-activities about modern developments in Asia. It is indeed often functioning as an "Ersatz-Center" of Asian Studies in Germany. However, since this paper is concerned with the situation in German universities, the Hamburg-based Institute like other extra-university research institutes dealing with Asian developments (like the Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaftliche Forschung in Köln or the Stiftung Politik und Wissenschaft in Ebenhausen near München) cannot be discussed in detail. Something like the *Livre Blanc*, reflecting the state of the art of Asian Studies in France, indeed, cannot so easily be matched in Germany, mainly because of the lack of national centers of Asian Studies.

Another observation with regard to Asian Studies in Germany is the gradual retreat of the formerly dominant concentration on linguistics and on philology. In the early 1960s an opening for more recognition of modern developments in Asian Studies was still clearly rejected. In the meantime most of the new chair holders have created such possibilities, but they themselves still have also to stick to the classical program. This generation of lasts and firsts is now in their early sixties and they will be replaced in the next few years. This is also true for major traditional Asian Studies Centers such as Bochum, Bonn, Hamburg, Köln, München and Tübingen.

The question in what direction Asian Studies in Germany will develop in the future depends largely on the successors of the present chairholders. Above all in Indology and Sinology, but also in Japanology, voices can be heard at the national conventions warning to leave the field of classical studies too soon. In how far this concern is also present in other European countries I could not find out. Maybe it is a typical German concern because of the geographical isolation of most of the chairholders. This at least makes the wish to stick to traditional orientations understandable.

In one discipline, however, the dice seem to have been cast in favor of rapid modernisation. This is the field of the formerly no less conservative discipline of Japanology, the first chairs established in the mid 19th century, the very first here in Leiden in 1855 (chairholder was Johann Joseph Hoffmann, a friend of Franz von Siebold). Accounts of the History of Japanese Studies in Europe show that in spite of Japans rise to a superpower - up to World War II modern developments found little attention in the curricula of Japanese Studies.

In fact, it was only in the early 1980s that universities in Germany and in other European countries as well suddenly experienced a rush of students to the formerly rather small departments. Student numbers in Germany trebled, even new universities such as Koblenz, Herdecke or Hagen created centers of Japanese

Studies. In Berlin a Japanese-German Centre was established in 1985, the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo was opened in 1987, followed by an Association of Social Science Research on Japan in Berlin in the same year. 1990 finally saw the foundation of the German Society for Research on Japan, replacing formerly loosely structured associations of Japanologists, publishing its own newsletter and a journal on research about Japan. Its program includes conferences and support of research; improvement of communication and information with regard to Japan studies in Germany and strengthening of institutional representation.

About the same period 1985-1990 Jan van Bremen wrote a report mentioning similar developments of Japanese Studies in the Netherlands. He sees most conspicuous trends in

- 1) the growth in the number of students and academic staff, and in the variety of specialities and disciplines comprising Japanese studies
- 2) The spread of modern Japanese Studies in the Netherlands
- 3) The increase in the number of institutes offering Japanese or Japan related courses and
- 4) The creation and operation of a new network for cooperation and exchange in Japanese Studies in Europe. (cf. Bulletin of the European Association of Japanese Studies, 1990, pp. 12-17).

This development if not explosion of Japanese Studies in Europe in the 1980s - there are similar reports from France and other countries - shows the potential of the old institutes of Asian Studies. Even if they were formerly almost exclusively concentrating on philology etc., if there is a real or a conceived need in Europe to better understand modern developments in that part of the world the old Institutes are obviously able to fulfill new requirements. The reasons of the rush into Japanese studies in the mid-1980s are not known - at least not to me - most likely it had something to do with Japan as the new economic superpower, threatening the old established economies in their own countries.

Similar "reaction" of Asian Studies can be seen in other parts of Europe. In the United Kingdom there is presently obviously a preoccupation with the potentials of the Pacific Rim. Ian Brown, a colleague from the SOAS in London, speaks in a written communication even about a "spectacular growth" in the study of the rapidly growing economies on the Pacific Rim. His explanation of the phenomenon is: "Research on the Pacific Rim is largely driven by the wish to 'discover' the reasons for the rapid industrial growth which has been experienced by many parts of that region, to establish a model which might be applied by others...".

Whether Japanese Studies, or studies on the Pacific Rim, or studies of the potentials of the ASEAN-countries, wherever we look in Europe we see in recent years new dynamics unfolding in Asian Studies. A representative selection of activities on the European scene is published today in the first issue of the IAS-Newsletter. There are reports about the steadily increasing activities of the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies in Copenhagen, or about the development of the "Baby Krishna-project" and various other initiatives coming from the Netherlands. Leiden in particular seems to be developing into a European Center of Asian Studies. Those of us who are coming here regularly for our research on Indonesia, are truly impressed with all these activities. To them belong also "Eden", the Indonesian Environmental History-Project, the Erasmus Program on

Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia and the foundation, respectively the management of EUROSEAS, the European Association of Southeast Asian Studies.

Because of lack of time we cannot go into more detail. But let me mention one more - perhaps the most important - aspect of Asian Studies in contemporary Europe: The activities and regular conferences of the various European Associations of Asian Studies, the contrast program to the earlier emphasis on philology and linguistics.

These European Conferences on Modern South Asian Studies (convening biannually since 1968) or the meetings of the European Association of Chinese Studies (convening biannually since 1975) or the European Colloquium on Indonesian and Malay Studies (convening biannually since 1978) and, of course, the European Association of Japanese Studies (convening tri-annually since 1978) with its secretariat presently here at Leiden, have spread the issues of Modern Asian Studies throughout Europe. They all developed out of private initiatives, participants of conferences pay their travel expenses themselves, the organizers determine the themes of the conferences, there is little bureaucracy involved. And yet, the conferences are getting bigger and bigger in size from convention to convention: There is quite obviously a need for this.

In my opinion this is a very healthy development. These associations are creating networks for the discussion of issues of general concern but, at the same time, allow participants to maintain their respective identities, their own school of thought and their individual approach to the problem without the prospect of necessary integration into a larger body. The variety of the cultural background of European scholars has provided new insights and perceptions in the past and will do so in the future as well. There is one thing, however, which worries me. This is the declining readiness to learn foreign languages in practically all countries. This is a serious matter. Asian Studies in Europe have always lived and profited from stimulations and inspirations provoked by different points of view or emphasis, rooted in the specific cultural traditions. The resulting scientific contributions were not "shelved" but were really read by the colleagues working on similar subjects in the various countries. The willingness or the capacity of doing so is disappearing with the knowledge of languages. This means a regrettable intellectual pauperization, if not a loss of the "European" contribution, if this trend continues. Maybe something can be done about this problem in the frame of this International Institute of Asian Studies, whose opening today is welcomed with high expectations.

\*) Rede anlässlich der Eröffnung des International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, 13. Oktober 1993