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Among Strange Peoples, in Foreign Temples We Would Learn to Respect Ourselves

-Images of Distant Cultures in Early Polish Accounts of Tibet,
India and Korea* -

레나타 체칼스카(Jagiellonian University)

<Abstract>

Renata, Czekalska. 2019. *Among Strange Peoples, in Foreign Temples We Would Learn to Respect Ourselves* *The language and Culture* 15-4: 1-23. 본 논문은 폴란드에서 타문화를 이해하며 그들의 문화를 알리려고 한 폴란드 초기의 연구를 설명하고 묘사하는 것을 목적으로 하고 있다. 폴란드에서 타문화를 알리려 한 연구자들은 폴란드의 아시아 문명 연구와 교육의 획기적인 시도로 여겨지고 있는 Fr. Fryderyk Szembek의 티베트 연구, Joachim Lelewel의 인도 연구, 그리고 Wacław Sieroszewski의 한국 연구들이다. 이 논문들에서는 “민족 문화는 신태그마에 외적 요소를 수용하여야만 문화 공동체를 국가와 민족 밖으로 확장할 수 있다”는 Antonina Kłoskowska의 이론을 배경으로 삼았다.(Jagiellonian University in Krakow)

핵심어: 초기 상호문화교육(early intercultural education), 아시아 관련 폴란드의 초기 자료(early Polish sources on Asia), 민족 문화의 확장을 위한 외적 요소의 중요성(importance of foreign elements for expansion of a national culture), Fr. Fryderyk Szembek, Joachim Lelewel, Wacław Sieroszewski

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1. Introduction.

Hearing for the first time about the tradition of worshipping the cow in the 21st century, we could be rather astonished. But after we learn of the economic arguments at the roots of this tradition, our perception of the 'cow worshipers' may suddenly alter.

The first time we see Indian children playing with cow dung, we might find their activity strange or even repulsive. But when we learn about the usefulness of cow dung cakes for the common people of India, the initial repulsion becomes an interesting discovery. Similarly, the eyes of a baby encircled by a thick black line of kohl might seem bizarre, but only until we learn about the kohl's antiseptic qualities and its protective usage against strong sunlight.

The first time we hear of a frogs' wedding, or notice the apparently topsy-turvy plan of a Hindu temple complex, the first time we see someone pouring their tea out of a cup onto a saucer, or learn about customs such as never thanking family and close friends, or not eating with one's left hand - we usually have trouble to comprehend. However, if we allow the new unknown culture open for us like a flower so we can look inside it, all these 'strange' customs suddenly start making perfect sense and no longer feel astonishing, shocking, puzzling or repulsive. On the contrary - through understanding, they become not only acceptable but also revealing and even fascinating.

This understanding of 'the unknown,' however, always needs to begin somewhere.

2. Early Polish accounts on Asian cultures.

To illustrate the Polish beginner stages of stepping into ‘the unknown,’ I would like to briefly portray three books introducing three different cultural traditions to Polish readers. The first work, dedicated to Tibet¹⁾, written by the Jesuit priest Fr. Fryderyk Szembek and published in 1628, is an early example of the Polish interest in distant lands. The second, concerning cultural history of ancient India²⁾, authored by a historian Joachim Lelewel and published in 1820, is an early sample of interdisciplinary scholarly approach to understanding distant civilisations. And the third, a book by Wacław Sieroszewski dedicated to Korea³⁾ published in 1905, is an early instance of combining personal experience of a new culture with data gathered from scientific sources.

2.1 Tybet Wielkie Páństwo w Azyey...[Tibet a Great State in Asia...] by Fr. Fryderyk Szembek.

Fryderyk Szembek’s *Tibet a Great State in Asia*...which the author describes as his “humble work,” is the first account of that part of the

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- 1) F., Szembek (1628) *Tybet Wielkie Páństwo w Azyey. Do którego Oycowie Societatis IESV, nie dawno przebywszy, Wiarę świętą Chrześciánską, błędami wielkimi Pogáńskimi w nim zlászowaną, do iey szczerości przywodzą. To iest, Krótkie opisanie zwyczáów, nábozeństw y Wiary národów Tybetskich, przez iednego Káplána tegoż Zakonu, z pism do Wielebnego Oycá swego Generálá o tym ztámtąd poslánych; á w Rzymie Drukiem światu wszytkiemu ogłoszonych, Roku terážniejszego 1628, Kraków.*
 - 2) J., Lelewel (1820) *Dzieje starożytne Indii. Ze szczególnym zastanowieniem się nad wpływem jaki mieć mogła na strony zachodnie*, Warszawa
 - 3) W., Sieroszewski (1905) *Korea. Klucz do Dalekiego Wschodu*, Warszawa.

world written in Polish. According to information given by the author himself on the title page, the book is based on the letters of a Jesuit father, who travelled to the distant land, and described all his experiences for the benefit of the Society of Jesus Superior General. The fact that Szembek based his account on two individual letters, as well as the nationality and name of their author, the Portuguese Jesuit Antonio de Andrade⁴⁾ are revealed in the text itself.

Szembek's *Tybet*...includes forty-eight pages and is divided into eighteen relatively short, individually titled chapters. Since the Polish Jesuit had never travelled to Tibet, his dependence on the description of cultural reality brought by Andrade's letters is not to be questioned. Yet the reliance of Szembek on Andrade's account of the journey was not that of an uncritical and faithful translator of the Portuguese original into Polish. Szembek made his own selection of topics from father Andrade's letters, to which he admits in the second chapter of his work :

Father Antonio de Andrade, Senior among all our Fathers associated with the court of the Great King Mogul of Asia [Emperor Jahangir], bearing in mind the particular duty which, as one of the principles compels our Order, to facilitate salvation for the human souls not only in Catholic and heretic countries, but also in the lands of wild nations, not yet known or known just a little (...), decided to search for these nations and went on an unknown and greatly dangerous journey (...). All that he saw and endured on this journey would be difficult to write, therefore I shall only mention a few things⁵⁾

4) Fr. Antonio de Andrade (1580-1634) - a Portuguese Jesuit priest, who conducted missionary activities in India. Known mainly as the first European who crossed the Himalayas, and as the founder of the first Catholic mission in Tibet.

5) All translations in this article are prepared by its author. The syntax as well as vocabulary of the original belong to the 17th century Polish language, however, for the sake of clarifying the meaning, the translated version has been modernised. For the original, cf.: F. Szembek, *Tybet Wielkie Páństwo w Azyey...* in: *Tybet i*

2.2 *Dzieje starożytne Indii...* [Ancient History of India...] by Joachim Lelewel.

Ancient History of India by Joachim Lelewel, published almost two hundred years later, is yet another example of a work based on secondary sources which – just as the previous one – in no way lacks original approach. Its author, an academic, a scholar of history, felt a considerable need to fill the gap in knowledge about the Indian Subcontinent with substantial and reliable data.

When India started to be of interest for the European politics and became a property of the inhabitants of Europe, by a stroke of luck various Indian scriptures fell into the European hands. Not to mention the great *Veda*, arranged in London in full, or the many manuscripts kept in Paris which Langlès describes (Paris 1807), or some other ones scattered diversely around Europe, let us quote these which came out in print in Latin, English, French and German languages⁶⁾

Tunquim Fryderyka Szembeka, R. Czekalska and A. Kuczkiewicz-Fraś (2015) Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 8. [*Ojciec Antoni de Andrade, Starszy wszystkich ojców naszych, którzy są przy dworze Wielkiego Króla Mogor w Azji, pominąć na osobliwy obowiązek, który ma ze swej reguły Zakon nasz nie tylko w państwach katolickich i heretyckich duszom ludzkim do zbawienia pomagać, ale też i w krajach narodów dzikich i dotąd światu naszemu albo niewiadomych, albo ledwie co znanych zachodzić (...), resolwował się szukać narodów onych i puścić się w drogę niewiadomą i wielce niebezpieczną (...). W drodze tamtej co widział i co ponosił, trudno wypisać, kilka tylko rzeczy wspomnę*].

- 6) As in the case of the previous quoted fragment, also here the language of the English translation has been modernised. For the original, see: J. Lelewel, *Dzieje starożytne Indii...*, in: “*Dzieje starożytne Indii*” *Joachima Lelewela*, R. Czekalska and A. Kuczkiewicz-Fraś (2015) Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 137. [*Gdy (...) India poczęła politykę Europy obchodzić i stawać się mieszkańcom Europy własnością i siedliskiem, dostały się szczęśliwie wielorakie księgi indyjskie do rąk europejskich. Nie wspominając o Wedzie ogromnej, w Londynie w całość złożonej, ani o wielu rękopismach w Paryżu będących, które Langlès (Paris 1807) opisuje,*

The book, a faithful testimony of the above defined academic approach, includes a fair and detailed list of numerous works. Lelewel, who had no access to primary sources at that time, decided to write his book relying on studies dedicated to ancient Indian civilization, and the translations from Indian literature which were available to him at the time. As he openly admitted, the main source for his work was the chapter on India from the two-volume history of the ancient nations of the world (*Ideen über Politik, den Verkehr, und den Handel der vornehmsten Völker der alten Welt*, Göttingen 1793–1796), written by a German historian Arnold Heeren. However, Lelewel who later became a world famous geographer and still remains well known because of his contribution to the study of geography of the Middle Ages, added maps and illustration which he himself drew for the purpose of the book, and also retained some level of originality in approach, for, as he stated:

India of Heeren became the only guide for me, however, the entire book and the historical and geographical details had acquired a different form. I shortened his statements and reflections, and instead I added some about the relationship between Indian and western thought, as well as about the knowledge of India by ancient Greeks and Romans (...) ⁷⁾

ani o innych różnie po Europie rozproszonych, przytoczmy te, które drukiem w językach łacińskim, angielskim, francuskim lub niemieckim ogłoszone zostały.

- 7) Here also, the language of the translation has been modernised. For the original, cf.: J. Lelewel, *Dzieje starożytne Indii...*, 144. [*Heerena Indie stały się jedynym dla mnie przewodnikiem, jakkolwiek całość i historyczno-geograficzne szczegóły inną postać przybrały. Skróciłem jego wyrazy i rozprawiania, za to o związku mniemań indyjskich z zachodnimi tudzież o znajomości Indii przez ród grecki i rzymski przydałem (...)*].

2.3 *Korea...* by Waclaw Sieroszewski.

The third book, Waclaw Sieroszewski's *Korea. The key to Far East*, is an attempt to understand and to describe an unknown culture taken to a new level. For, unlike the two earlier authors, Sieroszewski visited the land which he then portrayed in his work, combining his own observations and experiences with scholarly data.

The length of time Sieroszewski spent in Korea is not exactly known, for even though it is possible to establish the date of his arrival for October 10, 1903, the time of his departure can only be approximated as one of the last days of November the same year. The short visit, however, resulted in a 423 page long book, ready for print within a year after the author's return, and published simultaneously in Polish and Russian (the latter in a slightly abbreviated version). It quickly became the main source of knowledge about the Korean Peninsula in Central and Eastern Europe.

Sieroszewski's travels around the Far East, as well as his journey to Korea, were the result of his involvement in politics. As a socialist, he was first captured by the Tsarist Russian police, deported to Siberia (1880-1895) and then, since his safety remained constantly at stake, his friends arranged for him to be sent again to the East as a special envoy of the Russian Geographical Association. In this capacity, in 1902-1903, he visited Mongolia, Manchuria, Japan, China, and - on his way back - also Korea, India and Ceylon.

Even though Korea was not the primary aim of his journey, and the Korean experience was relatively short, it seems to have left a significant impression on the traveller, who candidly admitted that he found it impossible to prepare for that visit because all he was able to

hear were legends about Korea told “with some small alternations by qualified and unqualified experts of this corner of the world.” And later he added:

(...) as soon as I tried to acquire from them any more vibrant details, they would dismiss me with some dusty generalisations or bizarre stories about incredible happenings, out of which in no way I were able to stitch an overall image. Books also did not help me much in this matter, so I was sailing to Korea through gorgeous, golden-blue Japanese sea, free from being prompt by any ideas.⁸⁾

3. Three books – one method to tame the unknown

The three books being introduced here⁹⁾ come from three different centuries. *Tibet a Great State in Asia...*, for many years, was treated simply as a translation; *Ancient history of India...* – as its author admits – rests on secondary sources out of which to one he is especially indebted, while the author of *Korea. The key...* attempts to verify his own experiences of the unknown culture with some academic knowledge of the country. And yet, in spite of their different points of departure, all the three are characterised by several parallel qualities, one of them

8) For the original, cf.: W. Sieroszewski, *Korea...*, 2. [Skorom jednak próbował wydobyć z nich jakieś wyraźniejsze szczegóły, zbywali mię mglistymi ogólnikami lub dziwaczными opowieściami o niebywałych zdarzeniach, z których żadną miarą nie mogłem ukleć ogólnego obrazu. Książki też niewiele pod tym względem mi pomogły, więc płynąłem do Korei przez śliczne, złocisto-modre morze Japońskie, wolny od wszelkich idei podpowiedzianych].

9) Until now, the textual contents of neither of the three books were analysed with the approach applied here. Therefore, references to any former views or existing academic discussion were not possible.

being the common method applied to open the gates of unfamiliar cultures to their readers.

The use of this method by the three analysed authors will be illustrated in a brief analysis presented below. Due to the fact that majority of the readers would not have access to the full texts of the analysed works, for two of them (Szembek's and Lelewel's) are available only in Polish, and neither of the three has been translated into English, the analysis will concentrate only on the external characteristics (titles, structure, general approach) which can be fairly representatively shown in English translation, within the space of one article.

3.1 The titles.

The typically long and complicated Baroque title of Szembek's *Tibet...* translated into English reads in full as follows: *Tibet a Great State in Asia. Where the Fathers of IESV Society, who arrived there not long ago, the holy Christian Faith falsified over there by great Pagan omissions, now bring back in its real nature. That is, a Short description of customs, believes and the Faith of the Tibetan peoples, by one Priest of the Order, from the letters to his Reverend Father General sent from over there; and by being Printed revealed to the entire world in Rome, this Year of 1628* ¹⁰.

What appears immediately from this title, is the positive attitude of the 17th-century Polish Jesuit priest, responsibly trying to introduce the fresh knowledge about Tibetan people to the readers of his book. First of all, the readers are informed that Tibet is not just any state, but a "great state," located in Asia - that is, in the area of the world they

10) For the full title in Polish and its English translation, see: Bibliography.

were able to know by studying maps. The next piece of information, even though it could sound a little surprising, brings assurance to the readers that the Tibetans were also Christians, however, their faith fell into the net of bad influences and – just like all human beings – they temporarily lost their way and needed to be guided back to the right path. Hence the readers immediately could acquire two important messages, one – that they are going to read about a land which is great and therefore very important, and two – that people who inhabit that great land are not some strange, wild natives, but they are Christians seeking guidance, just as every one of them.

Similarly, two centuries after Szembek's *Tibet...*, a scholar of history Joachim Lelewel, gave the first Polish work on ancient Indian civilisation a title filled with meaning: *Ancient history of India. With particular reflection over the influence it could have had on western lands* ¹¹⁾. The title, in the first place, revealed the author's experimental comparative approach which made his work develop independently from Heeren, confirming in this way the originality of the study¹²⁾.

Moreover, it also gave the readers a justified notion that they will be able to see India in the light of what was familiar or understandable to them.

Just as in the case of *Tibet...*, here also the curiosity of potential readers is provoked not by words denominating strangeness or

11) For the full title in Polish and its English translation, see: Bibliography.

12) "India appears to be the great nucleus out of which spilled out and spread around a large part of moral and religious, and partly even political, principles of so many nations located to the east and to the north that a similar influence of India on western peoples is to be expected." For the original, cf.: J. Lelewel, *Dzieje starożytne Indii...* 107. [*India okazuje się być wielkim ogniskiem, z którego rozlała się i rozszerzyła wielka część ustanowień moralnych, religijnych, a w części nawet i politycznych tylu narodów na wschód i północ rozpierzchnionych, należałoby oczekiwać podobnego Indii działania na ludy zachodu.*].

unfamiliarity. Instead, there is a clear message pointing out to a possible common ground resulting from relationships between apparently distant civilisations¹³).

Wacław Sieroszewski's *Korea. The key to the Far East* and Szembek's *Tibet*...were separated by almost three hundred years. And yet, the need to come out with the title which would secure not only the readers interest, but also their trust that the country they are going to learn about is not just commonplace, appears to be rather similar. To be able to effectively introduce Korean culture and society to Polish readers, Sieroszewski promises also larger scale results. His potential readers will not only know about Korea, but through that knowledge they will gain access to understanding the Far East in general.

Trying to understand why the author names Korea the key to understanding other lands, like for example China¹⁴)and Japan¹⁵)already described in Polish literature much earlier, it is possible to reach a conclusion that it was his way to hint to the readers that this particular book will enable better understanding of everything they already know. Therefore, once again, the title does not carry a message of foreignness or peculiarity, rather it brings hope of better understating of all that which is already familiar. Since Sieroszewski never explained the idea

13) The actual, scientific confirmation of that common ground, or rather shared ancestry, came as a result of recent genetic study by David Reich, published in his new book, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past* (Oxford University Press, 2018). To the matters regarding the connection between India and Europe the book devotes one full chapter (II.6. *The Collison That Formed India*).

14) The first pieces of information about Chinese culture and civilization were included in the writings of the Franciscan priest, Benedykt Polak from Wrocław, who in the mid-13th century (1245-1247) participated in the Papal delegation to the Mongol Empire which took place about 30 years before the famous journey of Marco Polo.

15) The first mentions of Japan in Polish texts can be found in *Żywoty Świętych* [The Lives of the Saints] by Piotr Skarga, published in 1579.

behind the title, these speculations would need to suffice.

3.2 The structure.

Still remaining on the surface level of all the three books, let us now consider the structure of each one bearing in mind that they seem to follow a similar pattern, even though each one is of a different nature. *Tibet...* is a narration dedicated primarily to missionary activities, Lelewel's work on India relates mainly to associations between ancient India and the countries of western civilisation, and Korea is depicted by Sieroszewski in a monographic study of the land and the people. Obviously, the books' final forms resulted from practical reasons which influenced both the proportion and selection of contents. However, all the three works open with the basic set of facts, including geographical location, climate, landscape, inanimate and animate nature, natural resources, industry, agriculture, system of government and organisation etc., often illustrated with first impressions. Also, each one gives a prominent place to religious practices and beliefs, understood as the source of cultural traditions and customs.

Let us take a closer look at some excerpts, taken from the introductory chapters which convey their authors' attitude to the described cultural realities:

Tibet (...) because of its grandeur and power has also two names, one is Tibet, the other Kingdom of the Potent One, *Regnum Potentis*. The kingdom of Guge is the gate and the entrance to all the Tibetan land and kingdoms. Its capital city they call Tsaparang, (as far as it is until now possible to know) a little over sixty day long journey by horse from China. (...) The people of these lands are generally good natured, inclined to matters of

salvation, and pious. (...) They do not think themselves pagans and are truly different from all pagan nations which until now our society visited and encountered in all the kingdoms located over there (...)16)

It is probable that India experienced various external influences, and also must have acted outwardly, due to unavoidable relationships with distant peoples. Whatever would be the country's state, whichever people would inhabit her, she must have always been one of the most interesting and most mysterious parts of the earth. (...) In the history books of the nations who visited India, it is written that all of them, astonished by her extraordinariness, could not talk of India indifferently. Europe, proud of its education, does not flinch from exploring these distant lands in search for the cradle of everything: its roots, its speech, its imagination, its intellectual concepts.17)

Korea - a gorgeous country! The soil excellently fertile, Egyptian crops

16) Vocabulary as well as syntax of the translation has been modernised. For the original, cf.: F. Szembek, *Tybet...*, 5-6. [*Tybet (...) dla swej wielkości i potęgi ma też dwoje nazwisk, jedno Tybet, a drugie Królestwo Moźnego, Regnum Potentis. Cogue królestwo bramą jest i forą jedną do całego tybetskiego kraju i królestw w nim będących. Miasto jego stołeczne Kaparangue zowią, od Chiny (ile się dotąd wiedzieć może) jazdy coś nad dni sześćdziesiąt. (...) Lud krajów tamtych pospolicie jest dobrej natury, skłonny do rzeczy zbawiennych i nabożny (...). Nie mają się za poganów i prawdziwie są wielce różni od wszelkich narodów pogańskich, które dotąd zakon nasz na świecie zwiedził i poznał we wszystkich królestwach tamecznych (...).*].

17) The language of the English translation has been modernised. For the original, cf.: J. Lelewel, *Dzieje starożytne Indii...*, 7. [*Doznawała pewnie India różnych postronnych wpływów, równie sama musiała postronnie działać, przez nieuchronne z dalszym rodem ludzkim związki. Jakibykolwiek jej stan był, jakibykolwiek plemię ją zamieszkało, zawsze by jedną z najinteresowniejszych i najciekawszych okolic ziemskich być musiała. (...) Co jest w księgach dziejów zapisanych narodów Indie nawiedzających, te, zdumione nadzwyczajnością, oziębłe o Indii przemawiać nie mogły. Europa swą oświatą pyszna nie wzdraga się w tych odległych wschodu stronach szukać kolebki wszystkiego: swej krwi, swej mowy, swych wyobrażeń, swych rozumowych postrzeżeń.*].

indeed! Torrents of cheap Korean rice overflow even the rice-made Japan. Amazingly dense forests of rare trees grow there (...) Unlimited natural resources impatiently await the European hand...Gold, silver, copper...! Coal...Marble...! Flocks of birds (...); herds of deer; antelopes, goats and wild boars tread in the hills. It's the hunters' paradise indeed! But one must be careful because the tigers live there also. (...) Compliant people pay taxes willingly, honour the government and work for half the pay - out of habit and for pleasure...They are a little dirty but among them there are beautiful, slender women with steep breasts and broad hips...With their beauty they rise above all the women of the Far East.¹⁸⁾

Apparently, the first impressions the readers get as soon as they are able to peep into these new cultures through to begin with only a slightly ajar door, are rather positive, and the first images seem engaging enough to induce the urge to know more. Trying to balance their professional objectivity and generally positive didactic attitude, the authors employ also other undoubtedly effective means of expression.

In the case of Szembek, the most noticeable result of this procedure would be the titles given by him to individual chapters¹⁹⁾ which direct the readers' attention to the most significant issue discussed in each one

18) For the original, cf.: W. Sieroszewski, *Korea...*, 1. [*Korea cudny kraj! Żyzność ziemi niesłychana, urodzaje egipskie! Potoki taniego, korejskiego ryżu zalewają nawet ryżową Japonię. Tam rosną nieprzejrzane lasy drogocennych drzew (...) Nieprzebrane bogactwa mineralne czekają niecierpliwie dzielnej ręki Europejczyka... Złota, żelaza i miedzi w bród!... A jest i węgiel i marmur!.. Płactwa roje (...); stada jeleni; antylop, kóz i dzików brodzą w górach. Jest to raj myśliwców! Ale trzeba być ostrożnym: gdyż są tam i tygrysy. (...) Potulna ludność chętnie płaci podatki, czci władzę i pracuje napół darmo - z przyzwyczajenia i dla przyjemności... Jest trochę brudna, ale ma piękne, wysmukłe kobiety o stromych piersiach i szerokich biodrach... Przewyższają one urodą wszystkie kobiety Dalekiego Wschodu.*]

19) These titles are also a proof of Szembek's original input to the work, for they do not appear in Fr. de Andrade's letters.

of them. For instance, the titles of chapters five and six, 'They worship the Angels, while seeking their help,' 'They fear the devils, partly they conjure them, and partly make offerings for them,'²⁰⁾ indicate some parallelism of religious actions between the Tibetan people and the Roman Catholics. Titles of chapters seven, eleven, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and eighteen - 'The king's disposition to Christian religion and faith,' 'The king beholds his desire to Christian faith firmly, and despises the lamas,' 'The queen's devotion and her own, as well as the courtiers', great desire for Christian faith,' 'The disposition of these people towards the good and the Christian faith,' 'The king, led by his subjects' great desire for the Christian devotion, builds God a new church for the glory of His purest Mother; the old queen openly testifies her peculiar devotion on this occasion,' 'The king's celebration of the Holy Mass and the sign of the Holy Cross'²¹⁾ - supply the necessary information about the naturally good and noble character of the natives, as well as good will and pious deeds of the king and the nobility.

In the case of the works of Lelewel and Sieroszewski, the title chapters remain on the level of academic objectivity. Instead, Lelewel employs a large set of very effective affirmative statements in the introductory part of his book, such as: "There is no state on the earthly

20) 5. *Aniołom cześć wyrządzają, ich pomocy wzywając;* 6. *Diabłów się boją i onych częścią zaklinają, częścią im ofiary czynią.* Cf.: F. Szembek, *Tybet...*, 21 and 23.

21) 7. *Słowność króla do nabożeństwa i wiary chrześcijańskiej;* 11. *Król w zawziętej chęci ku wierze chrześcijańskiej trwa i lamasy pogardza;* 13. *Pobożność królowej i chęć wielka jej, także dworzan królewskich, ku wierze chrześcijańskiej;* 14. *Słowność narodu tamtego do dobrego i wiary chrześcijańskiej;* 15. *Król z wielką pobudką do nabożeństwa chrześcijańskiego poddanych swych kościół nowy Bogu na cześć przeczystej Matki jego buduje; stara królowa dziwną swą pobożność z tej okazji wszystkim oświadcza;* 18. *Nabożeństwo królewskie ku ofierze mszy świętej i znakom Krzyża świętego.* Cf.: F. Szembek, *Tybet...*, 26, 39, 45, 47, 51, and 58.

globe more rich in dazzling treasures than India...;” “This great part of land, divided by neither bays nor lakes as it seems, is so rich in harvests of all kind... ;” “And if the amount of gold does not seem to match the affluence of precious stones, the immeasurable variety of harvests not known anywhere else attracts easily a great measure of silver and gold from faraway lands...”²²⁾

As for Sieroszewski, apart from the already quoted opening paragraph, he remains rather sober and very thorough in his descriptions, taking the academic approach of being objectively detached from the subject. If we are to keep to the idea of discussing only the surface characteristics of the three works, his fascination with Korea and admiration for its people is proven singularly by the fact that he dedicated the entire book to this country, and - as already mentioned - by his giving importance to Korean culture through defining it in the book's title as the key to understanding the Far East.

3.3 The general approach.

Another external feature, typical for all the three discussed works and to be listed here as the final one, is the clear tendency of the three authors to explain the unknown through that which was familiar and comprehensible. For instance, Szembek (following de Andrade) referred the Buddhist idea of the Three Jewels to the Holy Trinity, pointed out

22) *Nad Indie nie ma na kuli ziemskiej kraju równie w błyskotne drogości zamożnego(...); Ogromna ta przestrzeń ziemi żadnym morzem, żadnymi zatokami ani jeziorami niepoprzerywana, jak się ogromną ukazuje, tak zasobną w płody wszelkiego rodzaju(...); Jeżeli zaś ilość srebra i złota nie zdaje się iść na równi z mnogością drogich kamieni, niezmierna różnorodność nieznanych indziej płodów ogromną ilość złota i srebra z dalekich stron łącznie przyciąga (...).* Cf.: J. Lelewel, *Dzieje...*, 5-6.

to the great resemblance between the images of Mother Mary and Tara (the feminine aspect of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara), as well as used the Catholic nomenclature for places of worship, religious ceremonies, and the implements used in religious practices. Lelewel, apparently convinced of a certain level of knowledge about ancient Egypt among his readers, in chapter twenty five²³⁾ discussed similarities and differences between Egyptian and Indian civilisations. Sieroszewski noticed numerous analogies in everyday countryside life, with a tendency to refer them directly to objects known to his readers, as for example the following short quote which brings the identification of a road side shrine as a chapel, and a comparison between the new shape of its roof and an image of a Japanese helmet supposedly known to the readers: "We pass by a small chapel with an antlered roof, and fan overlaps, just as the earflaps of a Japanese helmet."²⁴⁾ Similarly, "The slaves in Korea reassemble in many ways the Russian peasants before 1863 (...)"²⁵⁾ and "as for its size and shape Korea would be closest to Italy (...),"²⁶⁾ also make readers feel comfortable when it comes to their correct understanding of the new facts. Convinced about the effectiveness of his approach, Sieroszewski wrote in the journal he kept during his numerous journeys:

Among strange peoples, in foreign temples we would learn to respect

23) *Egiptu z Indiami różnice, w ich teozofii podobieństw*, cf.: J. Lelewel, *Dzieje...*, 48–50.

24) For the original, cf.: W. Sieroszewski, *Korea...*, 33. [*Mijamy małą kapliczkę z rogatym dachem, o okapach wachlarzowych, jak nauszники japońskiego szyszaka.*]

25) For the original, cf.: W. Sieroszewski, *Korea...*, 283. [*Niewolnicy w Korei pod wielu względami przypominają chłopów pańszczyźnianych rosyjskich przed 1863 rokiem (...).*]

26) For the original, cf.: W. Sieroszewski, *Korea...*, 2. [*z wielkości oraz kształtów Korea najbardziej zbliżoną jest do Włoch (...).*]

ourselves, and we would see that blood and tears are of the same lustre and colour everywhere (...) Then we would have returned better and stronger, to once again take the burden of existence which needs to be rolled up the hill again and again, on our healed shoulders (...)»²⁷⁾

These words of Wacław Sieroszewski beautifully portray a hypothesis that better understanding of our own culture comes from learning about other cultures, just as better self-identification results from confronting our own identity with a foreign one.

Judging by their areas of interest and the way they shared their views with the readers, getting to know the cultures of strange lands, filled with emotions, troubles, likes and dislikes of their inhabitants, was also a primary goal of Szembek and Lelewel. Following this preconception Lelewel focused on a series of parallels and analogies between cultures, taking into account religious practices, social customs, state organisation, as well as symbols and beliefs, whereas Szembek created an image of a distant land whose people, in their strengths and weaknesses, striving for purity and falling into the power of sin, were just like all of “us.” Observed from this perspective, all the three works present a modern, interdisciplinary, comparative approach, and perfectly combine both the authors’ deeply heartfelt fascination with the “new” and the balanced attitude of a careful researcher.

In this way, before the modern-day academia secured us with theories of intercultural dialogue, patterns of proper understanding other cultures,

27) For the original, cf.: W. Sieroszewski, *Dzieła* (1961) A. Lam and J. Skórnicki, vol. 18: *Szkice podróżnicze. Wspomnienia*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 97–98. [*Wśród ludów obcych, w świątyniach cudzych nauczylibyśmy się szanować siebie samych, i zobaczylibyśmy, że krew i łzy wszędzie mają ten sam blask i kolor...(...) Naówczas wrócilibyśmy lepsi i silniejsi, aby znów podstawić wygojone barki pod ciężar istnienia, co musi być wciąż wtaczany do góry (...)].*

and entire libraries filled with books on cultural anthropology - these writers' intuition combined with good will and a welcoming heart lead them to learn and study 'other' cultures with open-mindedness and respect which are nowadays taught at schools and universities just as if the idea of respecting "the other" was an exclusive discovery of the 20th or 21st century.

4. A proposed²⁸⁾ theoretical context.

Antonina Kłoskowska (1919–2001), an eminent Polish sociologist who advocated for the necessity of foreign influences for the evolution of any culture, claimed in her last published book that "[e]very developed nation builds its own culture and recognizes it as its own in contacts with other nations...,"²⁹⁾ and she added that every "[n]ational culture is a

28) The importance of classic theories formulated in the fields of Cultural Anthropology and Intercultural Communication, especially in the 20th century, is indeed undisputable. Therefore, discussing issues related to Cultural Studies without referring to the founding role of Edward T. Hall in the field of Intercultural Communication, as well as the cultural anthropologists, Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, in whose footsteps he followed, appears to be impossible. Also, in the context of the present study, Ruth Benedict's highly humanistic approach in defining each culture as a phenomenon not to be disparaged on the basis of being different from one's own, or Clifford Geertz's concept of interpretive anthropology, as well as the cognitive anthropology developed by Steven Tyler, and David Schneider's symbolic anthropology, all of these concepts represent theoretical approaches somewhat close to the intuitive practices of the three analysed authors. However, it is not possible to set their works in any specific theoretical framework would seem an ahistorical exercise. Therefore, just to show a possible theoretical context analogical to the intuitively applied approach of the three works, in this part of the article I will refer briefly to Antonina Kłoskowska's theory, also to remain consistent with my initial aim to portray the Polish approach to understanding other cultures.

29) Kłoskowska, A. (2001) *National Cultures at the Grass-Root level*, transl. by

dynamic system, because it is the product of the creative and receptive actions of people.”³⁰⁾To portray the dynamic character of these culture-creative processes, she coined a metaphor - a model of the “syntagma³¹⁾of a national culture.”

<그림 1> Model of the syntagma of a national culture.³²⁾

The diagram, illustrating Kłosowska’s model, includes six vertical columns. Each column stands for one of the six main systems of universal symbolic culture. While the core of every national culture composed by the cannon is placed centrally, the dynamic processes which include elements of foreign cultures take place along the syntagmatic axis. The syntagma of a national culture includes therefore

Chester A. Kisiel, Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 29.

30) Kłosowska, A. (2001) *National Cultures...*, 25.

31) The model, as Kłosowska herself admits, refers to the concept of French Structuralists, especially Roland Barthes, who expanded the concept of paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis, used in linguistics, onto other areas of culture.

32) Source: Kłosowska, A. (2001) *National Cultures...*, 27.

the “sphere of alienation” of foreign cultures (resulting from “rejection” and “ignorance”) and the “sphere of universalization” – which is the product of “affiliation”, “adaption” and “assimilation” of foreign components in this culture. Thus, in Kłoskowska’s model, the processes of cultural development happen not only within the individual systems or through interactions between them, but also through contacts with the elements of different cultures. This is why, among the mechanisms of creating and functioning of national cultures, she stresses the importance of „the expansion of the cultural community beyond the borders of states and nations”³³⁾ which, in her view, can begin only by affiliation, adaptation and assimilation of foreign elements into a national culture.

Since Kłoskowska’s theory stresses the need of accepting, adapting or even “domesticating” the foreign elements, it is proposed here a possible theoretical context for the early attempts to understand and explain the unfamiliar mysterious phenomena of “other” cultures, through that which was familiar and therefore acceptable, made by the authors who reached their goals rather effectively, in spite of lacking the entire theoretical apparatus of the modern day. Kłoskowska’s concept can also be understood as a scholarly continuation of their intuitive approach.

5. Conclusion.

The three analysed works dedicated to three ancient and magnificent cultures appear as rather successful attempts to understand and explain the unknown components of these cultures, proposed for the first time in the form of books written in the Polish language. It is also clear that

33) Kłoskowska, A. (2001) *National Cultures...*, 26.

through the efforts of their authors, the three books allowed for “the expansion of the cultural community” of Polish readers, and situated these cultures in the intellectual space of creative discoveries which can originate from foreign influences and inspirations.

This kind of an achievement could have been possible only because each of the discussed authors, most probably independently, found a key to a new culture. A key which could be defined as the fulfilment of one of the most basic intellectual needs of a human being: the need to discover and explain the unknown.

The works presented in this essay are, of course, only three individual examples presenting an open attitude towards distant civilisations. However, the three books covering a time span of almost three centuries can also be treated as fixed reference points on the timeline of intercultural dialogue. And, as such, they testify to the presence of the belief in necessity for researching, understanding and accepting other cultures in the Polish intellectual tradition.

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