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Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

**Report from the 5th International Asian Congress
and the XII International Conference “The direction
of Asia, diversity, dialogue on the 100th anniversary
of Poland’s independence and Azerbaijan independence”,
Toruń, Poland, 9–11 May 2018**

**Доклад 5-го Международного азиатского конгресса
и XII Международной конференции «Направление Азии,
разнообразии, диалог в связи со 100-летием независимости
Польши и независимости Азербайджана»,
Торунь, Польша, 9–11 мая 2018 г.**

Nowadays, more and more often we realize how important cooperation with Asian countries is for the development of Europe. They delight and invariably intrigue not only culture, but also scientific achievements and world-class scientists who make an invaluable contribution to European resources. Aware of this, the organizers of the 5th Asian Congress have been organizing meetings of scholars, businessmen and politicians for 12 years. Every year more and more participants come, not only from Poland, but also from China, Turkey, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand, India, Russia or Azerbaijan and many more. Politicians, diplomats, scientists and even students meet in one place. This year’s Asian Congress gathered over three hundred people, which undoubtedly shows its large scale success, increase in popularity and world level. The event is additionally accompanied by secondary events such as: Asian films projections, night trip to the Teutonic Castle, presentation of baking traditional Thorn’s

gingerbreads, a fruit liqueur tasting, the “Komtura” show at the Teutonic castle, exhibitions presenting the achievements and contemporaneity of Azerbaijan, the Chinese idea of the Silk Road, philatelic KRL-D and Indian Day and many others. In addition, this year’s Congress was unique for one more reason, as its name suggests took place on the 100th anniversary of the independence of Poland and Azerbaijan.

Scientists from all across the world could present their works and hold valuable discussions, especially during 45 thematically different panels, organized in various places but located close to each other on the Thorn’s map. Being the secretary of this year’s edition of the Asian Congress, I had the pleasure to participate, inter alia, in the Indian panel, which took place at the Center for Contemporary Art.

The panel was opened by the presentation of Dorota Kamińska-Jones, who also was a moderator, the title of her speech was “Indian woman between “a new” tradition and “the old” patriarchy. Bengali painting in the service of nationalism”. The speaker presented to the listeners the images of women who could admire on the prepared slides and discussed them in relation to the cultural change taking place. It turned out that the image of a woman in the analyzed period of time, depending on the context, could be interpreted in various ways, e.g. a woman as a victim or as a romantic heroine. There was also a clear difference in presenting women, once as active participants in life, sometimes as struggling for subjective autonomy. It is impossible to ignore the change that occurred between showing beautiful women with full shapes, and then because of associations associated with harems, making a turn towards ethereal women, slim, hiding their charms, being like angels.

The next presentation was prepared by Agnieszka Staszczyk and had the intriguing title of “Symbols of Plenty and fertility in the former sculpture of northern India.” The author tried to show how the canons of the Indian sculpture were changing, and at the same time the attitude to abundance and fertility through the illustrations with sculptures presented on the slides. She carried out the participants through fascinating and sometimes surprising pictures that depicted, for example, characters with clearly exposed parts of the body that were associated with fertility, nursing mothers, phalluses, or what caused the greatest amazement of various charac-

ters in the birth position, including one scene of childbirth with closer to an unidentified animal, probably as the researchers determined the goat.

The next speech was entitled “A contribution to the search for the Polish equivalent of the Indian philosophical term *pramāṇa*”. The author, Ołena Łucyszyna, presented what exactly the *pramāṇa* term itself is, first breaking it into two component parts, literally means “proof” and “means of knowledge”. Subsequently, the speaker presented a whole range of ways of explaining the term, until finally she proposed her own definition, which can be applied on Polish grounds, while extensively justifying this way of understanding.

The last presentation belonged to me and was entitled “International Society for Krishna Consciousness (in short: ISKCON) as a social movement in Poland.” In this paper, I attempted to analyze and classify ISKCON into old or new social movements in relation to the classification created by Claus Offe. In addition, I wanted to make the audience aware that the denominational movement that I was discussing is not just a tourist attraction or a group in Poland which very often is treated as a sect (because of the Catholic Church’s attitude towards it) but a social movement like any other.

I am very pleased that in Toruń an event such as the Asian Congress has been organized for years, which allows you to exchange opinions, acquire new knowledge, learn about the culture and politics of Asia, as well as many other areas. Undoubtedly, such events bring a lot to the world of science and business, and at the same time provide a great opportunity to meet prominent personalities from around the world and to exchange experiences in one place.

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