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SUB Göttingen
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1
37073 Göttingen

✉ info@digizeitschriften.de

A translation with glossary might be left, of course, as a desideratum, but at the present time G. Hazai deserves the most sincere thanks for his initiative and for the realisation of this fine edition.

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Martine Robbeets: Review of Veronika Veit (ed.), *The role of women in the Altaic world. Permanent International Altaistic Conference 44th Meeting, Walberberg, 26-31 August 2001*. (Asiatische Forschungen 152.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006. 335 pages, 12 black-white illustrations. Dimensions 24 x 17 cm. Hard cover. 98 Euro. ISBN10 3-447-05537-5, ISBN: 978-3-447-05537-6.

Martine Robbeets, Seminar für Orientkunde, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, DE-55099 Mainz, Germany. E-mail: martine_robbeets@hotmail.com

The leading role in the Altaic world was, just as it still is in large parts of the world today, reserved for men. Comprising a collection of thirty-seven papers presented at the 44th meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference held in Walberberg, Germany, this volume concentrates on the part played by women. They feature as the main actresses in this multi-disciplinary exploration of the so-called "Altaic world". Recent decades have seen an increase in Gender Studies, but studies of women in Central Asia have remained relatively underrepresented. The publication of the 44th PIAC proceedings contributes to filling this gap in scientific literature.

When skimming through the contributions, the reader may wonder whether the label "Altaic" is used as a synonym for "Central Asian": twenty-nine articles deal

with the Turkic and Mongolic peoples inhabiting the region from the Caspian Sea in the northwest to present-day Mongolia in the northeast. Different uses of the term “Altaic” circulate in literature, but in the PIAC sense, it is commonly used as the collective name for the languages belonging to the Turkic, Mongolic, and Tungusic families and the peoples that speak them. In a number of previous PIAC proceedings the term also covered contributions on Japanese and Korean. The present volume includes only a single article in the area of Japanese studies, none in Korean studies, five in Tungusic studies, twenty in Mongolic studies and thirteen in Turkic studies. Only two papers take a comparative approach in the sense that they cross the borders of the individual areas. According to the editor’s note in the preface (7), the title of this volume is inspired by the Mongolian proverb: “It is not good for man to act differently than woman”, with a smoother translation by Frey Nāf (69) and Gálik (80): “a man should not act differently from his wife”. The provenance of the proverb may perhaps explain the imbalance between the areas of contribution, the majority being in Mongolic studies.

The designation “world” in the title covers the people, their artifacts, their societies and beliefs, their language and history. Eight articles take a historical approach on gender issues; seven articles deal with contemporary sociological matters relating to women; ten articles analyze the role played by women in classical or folk literature; six articles deal with marking feminine gender in linguistics; four belong to the sphere of religion in the sense that they discuss female characters in the system of beliefs and rituals; and one article is on art, dealing with women’s jewelry.

Although the “women” referred to in the title make up about half of the population of the Altaic world, it is not always easy to obtain accurate information about their lives. This is because the number of women appearing in literature is low to begin with. (Gálik (80): “There are only two women in Wang Meng’s Maimaiti cycle, not much in relation to the number of male characters here. The Chinese world is a world of men...”; Rybatzki (211): “Female n. pr. represent only a small part of the corpus of the Middle Mongolian names in indigenous sources. Out of about 900 n. pr., only around 50 are female n. pr.”; (E. Taube (279): “In den insgesamt 11 Lobpreisen (maqṭār) kommen Frauen expressis verbis nicht vor”). Second, if women appear at all, reference is often restricted to a certain class of women. (Sinor (266): “historical sources focus mainly on outstanding persons of the upper classes”). Indeed, the majority of observations on women in history and classical literature, such as those made by Drompp, Gol’man, Lam, Miyawaki-Okada, Okada, Pang, Pozzi, Sinor, Tryjarski and Wright, deal with upper-class women: concubines, princesses, *qatun* and empresses. A third obstacle to accessing information on women is the fact that women usually are relegated to the private sphere and that they play only a marginal role as mothers of sons or wives of husbands. (Kellner-Heinkele (118): “Women play only a marginal role ... a female character is given a positive, though traditional role, that of the faithful, intelligent wife or mother”; Pang (183): “The early history of the Manchus is not rich with information about the private life of the first Emperors”). Only few women are involved in power politics. (Wright (332):

“Power politics in the Liao was very much a man’s game.” (333): “And we note that while there were long periods in Liao history without a reigning empress dowager, there was of course always a reigning emperor”). Fourth, even if some women play a decisive role, essential biographical data are treated with less care than in the case of their male counterparts. (Pozzi (190): “Indeed, although they appear only here and there in the documents and it is often difficult to know even their major biographical data, such as birth and death dates, and personal name, some women did not play a secondary role in the history of the Manchu”).

A fifth impediment is the fact that the information about women is more often than not second-hand: history is written by men. (Gießauf (82): “Alle relevanten Texte stammen aus Federn, die Männerhände führten”). Perhaps connected with the exclusively male viewpoint on women is the sixth difficulty, namely that sources on women often reflect a negative image. (Sárközi (231): “The figure of the goddess having a negative role in this story, reflects the ideology of a later, paternal society”). There is little room for heroines (Stary (277): “to our great surprise, not a single word is spent about the heroines. ... At this time, there was no more space for Manchu female heroes in Qianlong’s Qing China”) and, as is observed in the articles written by Birtalan, Heissig, Meserve, Sárközi and J. Taube, women are frequently depicted as evil beings, witches, harmful spirits or monstrous goddesses. A final impediment is that historical foreign sources on women in Central Asia tend to focus on shocking news such as polygamy, levirate, concubines and harem ladies. (Tryjarski (308) citing Baranowski’s opinion on Starowolski’s book: “it was a success of a porn book, and not of an Orientalist work”; Gießauf (92): “Vielmehr spiegelten die präsentierten Bilder sehr häufig die Intentionen der Verfasser unserer Quellen, die Erwartungshaltungen sowohl der Berichterstatter als auch des potentiellen Publikums ... bei der Konstruktion des und der Fremden wider.”).

In spite of the great difficulty of accessing women’s life in the past, the reader is offered more than just a glimpse of the lives of Altaic women in history. It is impossible, in a limited space, to do full justice to all the contributions under review, but a leitmotif that connects many articles is the observation that women enjoyed more authority, freedom and respect in the context of nomadic societies than in sedentary societies. But, even if their status was relatively high, the leading role in society was still reserved for men. Although the volume abounds with historical perspectives, the contemporary status of women in the Altaic world is, with only three articles written by Anayban, Chmielowska and Hisamitdinova, poorly studied.

Another perspective that is unfortunately lacking is the comparative Altaic angle. Although the volume studies a single, pre-arranged theme, i.e. women, in the context of different area studies, namely Turcology, Mongolistics and Tungusology, it fails to cross the boundaries of the individual areas and to investigate parallels and differences in a truly Altaic context. There are only two contributions that somewhat escape this criticism. One is the article by Dobrovits, which studies the spread of an ethnogenetical myth from east to west. The other is written by Frey Näf and compares labour division in Mongol culture with Turkic nomadic cultures of Central

Asia. In spite of his remark (98) “... dass ein Vorschlag ..., die weiblichen dämonischen Gestalten Eurasiens zu vergleichen, noch immer nicht aufgegriffen worden ist”, Heissig limits his study of the motif of burning witches to an exclusively Mongolian context. The lack of a comparative perspective is most blatant for the articles dealing with linguistic topics. Alpatov concentrates on Japanese, Kurpeshko on Shor and Kalchofner, Rybatzki, Senderjav and Solntseva all focus on Mongolian.

The originality of the contributions is at times questionable. Alpatov's contribution, for instance, is not only a summary of an article that appeared elsewhere in Russian; his discussion of the use of the 1st person pronouns in male and female speech and of the different words for 'wife' has appeared under a different title in the previous PIAC proceedings (Boikova & Rybakov 2006: 7-11). The overlap between the present theme and the theme of “Kinship” of the previous PIAC proceedings further becomes apparent in the contributions of Anayban (compare Boikova & Rybakov 2006: 13-18) and Boikova (compare Boikova & Rybakov 2006: 63-70). Novelty also appears to be lacking in Solntseva's contribution, in which she makes reference to previous articles on the same topic by the same author. The articles on the expression of feminine gender in Mongolian, contributed by Kalchofner and Senderjav, deal with exactly the same topic, with the difference that one is written in English and the other in German. Finally, the articles contributed by Okada and Tryjarski lack creativeness because the bulk of their contributions consists of translated passages with little room given to scholarly analysis.

Three articles do not achieve the stated purpose of the book. In spite of the reference to “Two Women in Wang Meng's Xinjiang Stories” in Gálik's title, the article is rather an analysis of the (male) Chinese writer Wang Meng than of two of his female Uighur characters. It is not only the title of Kurpeshko's article, “Female Names Shor Textbooks” [sic.], that will puzzle the reader. Apart from a list of about thirty-three Shor female names lacking any linguistic analysis, the majority of the article is devoted to a rather schoolish description of the Shor people, their economy, culture and education. The conclusion (121) “Representatives of different nationalities help the Shor people to regain their education and culture *through the means of female names*” [emphasis added] is just as puzzling as the title. Finally, Solntseva's article on kinship terms would have fitted in the previous PIAC proceedings on kinship (Boikova & Rybakov 2006), but the connection to the present theme is hard to discover.

Although the title of this volume is in English, the preface, the structural divisions and six articles are written in German. This may limit the accessibility of the work for some readers. The book further contains two translated articles, one by Nima from Mongolian into German and one by Remilev-Schlüter from Russian into English. The translations are clear and readable, and the original text is appended to the end of the article. It is disturbing that there is no standard for the transcription of linguistic expressions: most are romanized, some are given in Cyrillic script, and the contributions by Kalchofner, Sárközi and Solntseva alternate between the two systems within the same article. The system of reference also lacks standardization.

Whereas the reference section normally occurs at the end of each article, some articles have the references in the footnotes. The articles written by Heissig, Hisamitdinova, Kurpeshko and Tryjarski do not list references at all. A subject or author index is not included.

One could object that the volume is not very up-to-date because six years elapsed between the 44th PIAC meeting in 2001 and the actual publication in 2007. For a subject such as Gender Studies in Central Asia, which is relatively under-explored, however, the elapsed time is not expected to have any serious repercussions on the actual state of the art. Taking time for compilation and correction resulted in a carefully edited and elegantly bound volume. There are only minor errors such as some typographical mistakes (17: *characteritics* [characteristic], 104: *neagative* [negative], 106: *genitve* [genitive], 128: *gezetteer* [gazetteer], 151: *centures* [centuries], 161: *Vermehrungung* [Vermehrung]) and problems with the representation of special fonts (104: “the terms *fvfg* and *qmqg*”, 105: “two lexemes such as *qm xYn*”, 245: “*Kanour*” 294: “*čil oi øija*”). Reference is made to two pictures that are not included in the volume (160: “..., wie im Bild 1 gezeigt, ...”, “Wie im Bild 2 gezeigt, ...”).

One of the major strengths of this book is the significance of its theme. Although Gender Studies is prospering across the world, the study of women in Central Asia has only had a modest share up to the present. This situation has improved with the publication of the 44th PIAC proceedings. The volume reflects interdisciplinary and international cooperation of a considerable standard. Most articles in this volume are highly informed about the methodological and factual complexities of their discipline, while only a few are not.

The contributions are thematically coherent. It would increase the readability of the book if the articles were not ordered alphabetically by the family name of the author, but in thematic subsections. This would prevent the reader from having to hop back and forth between different areas and different disciplines such as sociology, history, literature, linguistics, religion and art. Out of five articles on the Tungusic area, for instance, three (Pang, Pozzi and Stary) deal with the founding period of the Manchu Qing-empire under emperor Nurhaci and two (Meserve and Walravens) deal with medical history. Six articles (Dobrovits, Frey Näf, Gießauf, Miyawaki-Okada, Okada and Sinor) deal with the status of women in medieval Mongolian society. Three articles (Kalchofner, Rybatzki and Senderjav) deal with marking feminine gender in Mongolian. Three articles (Birtalan, Heissig and Sárközi) deal with demons in Mongolian epic stories. The volume would even gain in relevance if these interconnections were marked in some way or other.

“Cherchez la femme” was the task assigned to the contributors of the 44th PIAC meeting. This assignment has been successfully accomplished and skillfully edited in a volume that fills a considerable gap in gender literature. People interested in Gender Studies who want to know more about the status of women in Central Asia in history would benefit from reading this book. The proceedings are also of interest to students and specialists in Central Asian Studies who want to learn more about

historical gender issues in their field. Altaicists in search of gender-driven parallels and contrasts between different Altaic societies, however, will not find what they are looking for. Sociologists interested in the social conditions of Altaic women today will equally be disappointed.

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