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Report

Report on the 60th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference, August 27–September 1, 2017, Székesfehérvár, Hungary

Ákos Bertalan Apatóczy

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This report reviews the contributions presented at the 60th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (August 27–September 1, 2017, Székesfehérvár, Hungary). The author was the president of this conference.

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The 60th anniversary Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC) was organized by the Institute of Oriental Languages and Cultures of the Faculty of Humanities, Károli University Budapest (KRE), and held in Székesfehérvár, Hungary, between August 27 and September 1.

The idea of a permanent conference for Altaic studies was the Austrian orientalist Walther Heissig's. He organized the first conference in Mainz, Germany, in 1958 and served as secretary-general for the first years. For many, that time is remembered as the golden age of Altaic studies, when, for instance, the debate on the existence of a hypothetical genealogic linguistic relation of the region was at its height. While the generally accepted opinion on that matter has undergone a great change during the past six decades, the PIAC Meetings have always provided enough topics to be discussed by the participants. From the very beginning, however, other related topics (i.e. other than linguistics and philology) also made their way to the Meetings, thanks to the ever-growing number of participants. With the 60th Meeting, PIAC came to Hungary for the fifth time (1971 Szeged, University of Szeged—then József Attila Tudományegyetem; 1990 Budapest, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem; 1996 Szeged, József Attila Tudományegyetem; 2002 Budapest, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; 2017 Székesfehérvár,

KRE). Representing Károli University, Judit Nagy, the vice-dean of the Faculty of Humanities, welcomed the guests at the opening ceremony.

The opening speeches were delivered by the Secretary-General of PIAC Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, Ramazan Korkmaz, the president of the 2016 PIAC Meeting in Ardahan (Turkey), and the author of this report whose introductory lecture (*Prologue to the 60th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference*) was followed by presentations by Barbara Kellner-Heinkele (*Discovering Eurasian History in Müneccimbaşı's Chronicle*), Ágnes Birtalan (*The Divine Language in Mongolian Religious Texts*) and Oliver Corff (*Boundaries, Markers and Rivers: Their Scripts and Names in the Qing Shi Gao*), the keynote speakers at the Meeting. After the keynote lectures Oliver Corff introduced the audience a new volume issued for the occasion of the 60th Meeting titled "60 Years of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC)—A Bibliography" (Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin 2017), which contains the bibliographical data of all PIAC conference lectures as well as that of all PIAC proceedings ever issued. One is on the safe ground when predicting that this compilation, with a copious thematic index, will be an essential reference book for the Altaistic literature.

After the official events of the first day, with the kind assistance of Attila Rákos, a regular PIAC participant and a native of Székesfehérvár, the PIAC guests had a guided tour of the most important historical sites of the city, once the coronation site and capital of the Hungarian Kingdom.

On the second day of the Meeting, Hülya Yıldız, in connection with a neat description of the research history of the hardly readable parts of the *Bilgä Qayan* inscription, proposed some new readings for the parts in question. Kyoko Maezono had her paper about the Mongol and Japanese use of the Chinese script (based mostly on the *Secret History of Mongols* and the *Kojiki* 古事記). By analysing the Middle-Turkic text of the "pagan" *Oğuz-nāmā* written in Uyghur script, Balázs Dankó came to the conclusion that despite the text being an *Oğuz-nāmā*, its language can be categorized as a Kipchak variety. Koichi Higuchi, through the scrutiny of two fragmentary Mongolian versions of the *Lotus Sūtra* (or *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*) found in Turfan, proved that although the texts were translated after the so-called second introduction of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia, they show archaic, pre-classical characteristics. An explanation for this phenomenon may be that they were not directly translated from the Tibetan, but from the Uyghur version showing parallels with the Turfan fragments. Mihály Dobrovits shed light on some misunderstandings concerning the earliest contacts between the Turks and the Byzantine Empire, thus providing us with a more elaborate description of the period. The paper of Masato Hasegawa depicted the journeys of Korean scholars to Manchuria in the 17-18th centuries, as well as their accounts of the circumstances they faced shortly after the Manchu invasion. Alicia Campi examined the origins of the term "Steppe Road", which is contrasted to the Chinese concept of "Grasslands Road" in the larger context of the Silk Road. Liu Ge introduced her research on the *d/t* alternation in the text of Uyghur contracts in the Mongol Era. Wu Yingzhe,

after a thorough examination of the tribal names *Shi Wei* (失(室)韋) and *Meng Wu* (蒙兀) that appear in the recently unearthed Khitan Small Script *Gong Ning Taishi* epitaph, came to the conclusion that the former may not only be reconstructed as *filunən* but also as *filbunən*, while for the reconstructed form of the latter he offered *munjuət*. Hsiao Su-ying analysed the ‘SAY’ verbs of the Manchu language, which mostly occur in Qing-era texts and compared their grammatical functions to their Mongolian counterparts. Bayarma Khabtagaeva talked about the Mongol influence detectable in the Evenki dialects of Buryatia, the study of which may help with Proto-Mongolic reconstructions as well as in determining the position of Khamnigan among Mongolic languages. Pavel Rykin introduced the noun cases appearing in the data recorded by the Sino-Mongol glossary *Dada yu*, and concluded that the data show a transitional stage between Middle Mongol and Modern Mongolian. Chen Hao, in his lecture, shared his conclusions on the early Turk spiritual world while studying the word *barq* for the translation of which, in the context of the Old Turkic inscriptions, he offered ‘shrine, temple’. Michał Németh presented his research on difficulties in the reconstruction of the chronology of sound changes in Middle Western Karaim, with special regard to the $*\eta > i$ change in North-Western dialects and $*\check{s} > s$, $*\check{o} > e$, $*\check{u} > i$ changes in South-Western dialects. Rákos Attila spoke about the study of Nicolaes Witsen’s Kalmyk/Oyrat linguistic material published by the turn of the 17–18th centuries, while Mária Magdolna Tatár unfolded the etymology and possible Alanian connections of the name of a 13th-century Cuman dux.

On the third conference day, participants visited Budapest for a one-day excursion. The program on August 31 began with one of the most anticipated panels of the Meeting. The independent section of Dieter Maue, Mehmet Ölmez, Étienne de La Vaissière and Alexander Vovin introduced a multidisciplinary analysis of the Khüis Tolgoi inscriptions (*Xüis tolgoi*) found in 1975 in Arkhangai county, Mongolia. The inscriptions, long believed to be illegible due to severe weathering, and later identified as written in Brāhmī script raised the interest of D. Maue already in the 1980s. After collecting some better-quality images of them, he transcribed the text in 2012. Accompanied by the three other colleagues, he visited the Mongolian location in 2014, which resulted in usable 3D images of one of the inscriptions (of the first inscription 3D images could not have been taken). As of now the exact relation between the two inscriptions on the two separate stones has not been established. In their presentations D. Maue talked about the use of the Brāhmī script on the steppe, while M. Ölmez described the location and the condition of the inscriptions. É. De La Vaissière sketched out the historical background of the inscriptions and talked about *Niri Kagan* (†603~4), mentioned twice in the text. Assuming that the Bugut inscription is correctly dated to 581~2, he dated the Khüis Tolgoi inscriptions to the time of the *Tiele* (鐵勒) who defeated *Niri Kagan* or somewhat later for the time of the *Xueyantuo* (薛延陀) khaganate, i.e. the beginning of the 7th century. Examining mostly the morphology of the fragmentary text, A. Vovin determined the language of the Khüis Tolgoi inscriptions to be some kind of

Tabgatch (even if very different from the one we know from Chinese transcriptions), which is, more closely related to Mongolic than Khitan is. Although the panel laid stress on the preliminary nature of their findings, if their discovery can be justified by further analysis, this result changes what we know about the history of Altaic peoples at the very foundations (regardless of the diachronic and genealogic relevance of the term “Altaic” here). If the now hypothetic Mongolic language of the Khüis Tolgoi inscriptions proves to be true, the importance of that finding will also be self-evident, since these texts predate the Orkhon inscriptions by a century.

In the following section, Gyudong Yurn, Gyeyeong Choe, Sangchul Park and Minkyu Kim highlighted some controversies surrounding the inventory of the *Phags-Pa* script that they found via computer-powered corpus analysis, and based on that offered corrections to the Unicode coding of the script. Kao Hsiang-tai shared a report about his fieldwork on Manchu inscriptions in Beijing. Kinga Szálkai examined the 20th-century dam construction projects in the USSR, interpreting them as symbols of state power, and she explained how their situation changed after the fall of the Soviet Union. Gözde Sazak expounded on the role of two elements of the Turkish symbol system, the *böke* and *kut-alp* motifs, in the cultural history of Turkey. By reinterpreting the legend of the *Āltūn Bīshīk* ‘Golden Cradle’, Ron Sela presented some new thoughts on the effectiveness of the legend as well as on the choice of the main characters. In her presentation, Rodica Pop spoke about the history and cultural value of the traditional Mongol symbols observable on the banknotes of the People’s Republic of Mongolia issued in 1921. Attila Mátéffy discussed, among other things, the metaphorical relationship between hunting and marriage that is found in the origin stories of the nomad peoples of Central Eurasia. Hartmut Walravens spoke about the correspondence between Józef Kowalewski, one of the founders of Mongolistics, and Bernhard Jülg, a pioneer in the study of the Kalmyk language. Tatiana Anikeeva described the situation of the old Turkic language manuscripts and printed books preserved by the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages, with regard to their significance in the history of oriental studies. Alice Crowther gave a presentation about the Manchu material collected by the German Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer in the 18th century.

The Meeting attracted nearly sixty participants from fourteen countries, and forty-three papers were presented in twelve sections.

On the last day, the participants eligible to vote approved the initiative of Oliver Corff to reinstate the PIAC Medal, renaming it the “PIAC Medal for Altaic Studies”. The predecessor of the medal, called the Indiana University Prize for Altaic Studies, was awarded between 1963 and 2014 with the generous support of Indiana University. The casting expenses of the new medal, will be incorporated into the registration fee of the annual Meetings. The medal will be awarded starting next year by a committee of three elected members complemented by, *ex officio*, the Secretary-General and the acting President of the Meeting. The following secret ballot was to decide who should hold the office of the Secretary-General for the coming five-year period. The PIAC voters elected Barbara Kellner-Heinkele for her third cycle. As re-

elected Secretary-General, she thanked in her concluding speech the Károli Gáspár University and its faculty and staff for organizing the Meeting and announced that, following an official invitation and its acceptance by PIAC voters, the 61st PIAC Meeting in 2018 will be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.