HARRASSOWITZ Verlag

Die Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen als Geschichtsquelle und Literaturdenkmal, Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Erklärung by Pavel Poucha
Review by: Nicholas Poppe
Central Asiatic Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1958), pp. 82-83
Published by: Harrassowitz Verlag
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41926639
Accessed: 15/10/2014 13:03

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Harrassowitz Verlag is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Central Asiatic Journal*.

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 141.213.236.110 on Wed, 15 Oct 2014 13:03:42 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Pavel Poucha, *Die Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen als Geschichtsquelle und Literaturdenkmal, Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Erklärung*, Verlag der Tschechoslowakischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Prag, 1956. 248 pages in 8°, with illustrations and a map.

The *Secret History* has not yet been thoroughly studied as a literary and historical work. Professor Poucha partly fills this gap with his interesting book. It is divided into the following chapters: 1. Introduction (pp. 7–48), 2. Ancient Mongolian Names (pp. 49–101), 3. Genealogy of Chingis Khan (pp. 102–109), 4. Mongolian Military Organization and Warfare (pp. 110–145), 5. Ordinary Life, Social Structure, and the Beginnings of Steppe Feudalism (pp. 146–165), and 6. Mongolian Culture (pp. 166–191). Appendices, a German and a Russian *résumé*, indices, and a map conclude this publication.

The author points out in the Introduction that the importance of the *Secret History* lies in its being a detailed picture of Mongolian life seven hundred years ago. Although it contains little new historical data, it presents a surprisingly clear picture of Mongolian society in the 13 th century, its material and spiritual culture, and presents ideas by which that society lived. Thus, the *Secret History* is clearly divided into two parts, *viz.*, a historical and a literary part.

On pp. 15–16 a useful survey of identical portions from the *Secret History* and Rašīd ad-Dīn's *J̌āmi' at-tawārikh* is given. As it might be expected in advance, Rašīd ad-Dīn's work contains much more historical data, but on the other hand, Poucha correctly remarks that the *Secret History* is in some aspects much closer to the truth than some other sources (p. 38). It is difficult to say whether the *Secret History* is politically biased as the author believes. It is possible, of course, that the genealogies given there are distorted, although I would not suspect them of being *deliberately* distorted or, to put it bluntly, faked. I do not doubt that they contain fantastic elements, but the evaluation of such legendary or semi-legendary genealogies of the distant past should be different from that of forgery of political documents in our era of dishonesty.

Both in the Introduction and in other parts of the book numerous names and words are explained. Some of the explanations given require correction. Thus, *märgän* (*mergen*) following a proper name is not "wise" but "marksman" (p. 39). Vladimirtsov demonstrated long ago that *mergen* was an ancient title. Mongolian *γaqai jil* is, contrary to Poucha, to be translated the "hog year" and not "sow year" (p. 9). As a matter of fact, the feminine form *čaγaγčin* "white" can be applied to the name of any animal (if it is a female) and not only to *γaqai*. The etymology of the word *budaγan* "pap, porridge" as derived from the same root as *budang* "fog" (p. 41, note 51) is doubtful. On the other hand, the name *Bodončar* is probably derived from *bodong* "boar" and not *bodo* "a head of cattle" as Poucha believes (p. 42).

At the beginning of the second chapter the Mongolian titles (*baγatur*, *bayan*, *beki*, etc.) are analyzed (p. 49). Most of them present no difficulty. As for the name *Qabiči* (cf. also *Qabuči* and *Qabutu*), it is derived from *qabu* "marksmanship, ability to hit the mark, good shooting" and not from the word for crayfish (p. 49).

This is followed by a useful survey of ancient names of clans, tribes, and nations (pp. 56 ff.). Like those in other languages, most of these names have no satisfactory etymologies. A section on personal names, both female and male follows (pp. 82 ff.). This part of the book is important, because it presents well systematized material.

Finally, a survey of geographic names mentioned in the *Secret History* is given (pp. 95 ff.).

Bypassing the third chapter (Genealogy of Chingis Khan), it should be remarked that the next chapter deals with the Mongolian army. In it the organization of the army of Chingis Khan is discussed in detail and additional data from Marco Polo and other sources is given. However, the most interesting chapter for the undersigned is Chapter

This content downloaded from 141.213.236.110 on Wed, 15 Oct 2014 13:03:42 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Five in which the old Mongolian way of living is paistakingly reconstructed: cattle husbandry, hunting, food, social groups and social organization, and the structure of the state. The society described in this chapter is characterized by the author as an early form of "steppe feudalism", a term applied in Mongolian studies for the first time by Vladimirtsov. It is a transitional form of society characterized by the decomposition of the original tribal system and the acquisition of some feudal features. According to Wittfogel's terminology, this is a typical marginal society.

The last chapter is devoted to culture in the wider sense, i.e., to dwellings, means of communication, festivals, and religion. The discussion of religious beliefs is particularly interesting, because there previously was no more or less detailed survey of ancient Mongolian religious practices. This chapter is concluded with remarks on literary activities at that time and on the presumed author of the *Secret History*, Šigi Qutuqu.

To conclude this review, it should be remarked that this interesting book will certainly prove helpful to further research.

Seattle Nicholas Poppe

Л. С. Пушковский, Монгольские, бурят-монгольские и ойратские рукописи и ксилографы Института Востоковедения, I: История, право, Академия Наук СССР, Институт Востоковедения. Издательство Академии Наук СССР, Москва-Ленинград, 1957. [L. S. Puchkovskii, *The Mongolian, Buriat-Mongolian, and Oirat Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute of Oriental Studies*, I: *History and Law*. Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Institute of Oriental Studies. The Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Moscow-Leningrad, 1957.] 276 pages in 8°, 11 illustrations.

The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, the former Asiatic Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences, possesses one of the largest collections of Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs, which is rivalled only by the collections of the Learned Research Committee of the Mongolian People's Republic in Ulanbator. The Leningrad collection unfortunately remained little known and almost inaccessible to most of the scholars, because there existed only brief and incomplete catalogues of some portions of that collection. With the exception of some historical manuscripts described by Ts. Zhamtsarano, the shamanist manuscripts described by me, and some other materials, there were practically no detailed descriptions of Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs belonging to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

The book under review is excellent and important in many aspects. Puchkovskii has been the custodian of Mongolian books at the Institute of Oriental Studies for more than twenty years, in the course of which he acquired a very profound knowledge of the material and became one of the best connoisseurs of Mongolian manuscripts in the whole world.

Puchkovskii's book is devoted exclusively to historical and legal materials. It contains detailed discussions of 27 Mongolian, 12 Buriat-Mongolian, and 4 Oirat historical works. As far as I can judge, this list seems to be rather complete. I do not find in it, however, the historical work *Abatai qaγan-u teüke* "The History of Abatai Khan", which is also called *Erdeni juu-yin namtar* "History of Erdeni Juu" or *Qalq-a oron-a burqan-u šajin angq-a delgeregsen-ü teüke* "The History of the Initial Spread of Buddhism in Khalkha", of which several copies exist, and one of which was brought by

This content downloaded from 141.213.236.110 on Wed, 15 Oct 2014 13:03:42 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions