



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences

ACTA ASIATICA
VARSOVIENSIA

No. 29

Warszawa 2016

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Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2016
PL ISSN 0860-6102
eISSN 2449-8653
ISBN 978-83-7452-091-1

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus, ProQuest Database

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BOOK REVIEWS

Claudia Derichs and Mark R. Thompson (eds.), *Dynasties and Female Political Leaders in Asia. Gender, Power and Pedigree*, Wien, Zürich, Berlin and Münster: Lit, 2013, 288 pp.

The collection of articles, which are gathered in the book titled *Dynasties and Female Political Leaders in Asia. Gender, Power and Pedigree* is a great source of information on gender issues written in English and edited by Claudia Derichs, Mark R. Thompson that was published by Lit Publishing House and released in 2013. It is an analysis of stateswomen in Asia, a continent which is generally thought as to be a place where the men are the ones who rule. There are few books issued in the 21st century on the problem of women's participation in political life in Asia. *The Gender Face of Asian Politics* by Aazar Ayaz and Andrea Fleschenberg, or *Women and Politics in Thailand: Continuity and Change* by Kazuki Iwanaga can be the example of such publications. Nevertheless, the lately published book by Derichs and Thompson is an interesting approach to undertake the problem of both – political and dynastic female leaders.

The book is divided into nine articles. It also contains a foreword with acknowledgments, introduction by editors and concluding remarks. It is based on field research, which took place for 3 years. Authors aimed to analyse the shared patterns, differences in leadership styles and means of achieving power with the emphasis on Asia in a global context (p. 9).

In the first article is titled *The Pioneers: Durga Amma, The Only Man in the Cabinet* by Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam. This chapter presents the political biographies of Sirima Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka and Indira Gandhi of India. In the article we can find quite detailed biographies of both ladies, but certain emphasis is set on Gandhi's

evaluation of the government. The relations of India and the US in the context of the war with Pakistan are mentioned as well.

The *Benazir Bhutto: Her People's Sister? A Contextual Analysis of Female Islamic Governance* by Andrea Fleschenberg is the analysis of the issue of the first Muslim woman prime minister. The author claims that there is no systematic analysis of Benazir Bhutto's governance (p. 65), so such analysis was needed and the article fulfils this necessity. Even taking into consideration that one may find in the bookstores the newly published book titled *Getting Away with Murder: Benazir Bhutto's Assassination and the Politics of Pakistan* by Heraldo Muñoz, the chapter by Fleschenberg was definitely the first approach toward this problem. The author in her text provides useful data, such as the electoral performance of the PPP under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto (p. 72), which can give the reader a wider context than only the gender issue in politics. Her political biography and performance are also delivered. All data ends with the day of her murder which gives a good frame for the analysis.

Ricarda Gerlach is the author of the third and the sixth chapter. The first one is titled *Female Leadership and Duelling Dynasties in Bangladesh*. Two competing for power female politicians (and prime ministers) Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh were presented in this paper. In this chapter the complaints from the female organizations' side are undertaken, as the prime ministers mentioned did not pursue women's interests while in power (p. 141). It is an interesting approach, since some of the readers would like to gain more information regarding the situation of woman in the politics of Asia. Nevertheless, the political career of both ladies was also presented in this chapter. The second one – *'Mega' Expectations: Indonesia's Democratic Transition and First Female President* – treats about Megawati Sukarnoputri, who was elected president of Indonesia in 2001. In this text, Gerlach argues that Sukarnoputri became the president because of her soft-spokenness and lack of "originality" (p. 247). Her path to gain office is described in quite a detailed way. Islamic women's organizations' opinions regarding Sukarnoputri are mentioned as well. She is portrayed as a perfect oppositional politician and a good successor of her father.

Presidentas and 'People Power' in the Philippines: Corazon C. Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is a paper written by Mark R. Thompson. He comes out with the statement that what distinguishes Philippine female leaders from South Asia's "leading ladies" is their

revolutionary route to power (p. 151). And from this theory he starts his comparison with the situation in other Asian countries. He raises the question of seeking “justice” by female leaders for their martyred husbands or fathers (p. 160). It is worthy to read this chapter, because of the wide knowledge from fields of politics and gender studies and many other examples apart from the main subject which can deepen the knowledge of the reader.

One of the best known female political leaders in Asia is Burma’s Aung San Suu Kyi. Her political leadership via moral capital is the subject of the chapter by Andrea Fleschenberg. The author emphasizes that all the analysis of her career are based on the pro-democracy movement or written by international political activists, so it is difficult to gather information about her activity (p. 194). Therefore, the approach toward this problem is a great opportunity for the reader. A wide context of information is also a strong point of this paper. The article also consists of a biography of Aung San Suu Kyi. Her way of thinking is presented through her letters and essays. It also delivers up-to-date information about Aung San Suu Kyi’s current activity.

The Malaysian context of female political leadership is raised by Claudia Derichs. In the chapter titled *Reformasi and Repression: Wan Azizah Wan Ismail* the political biography of Wan Azizah is introduced. It is compared to other women’s lives introduced in the book. The cultural and ethical case was undertaken to show that in Malaysia the segregation of male and female space does not strike the observers’ eye as much as it does in other countries like Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran or some Arab countries (p. 298). Derichs showed how different was the situation of Wan Azizah from others in the region.

The first foreign minister and the Diet chairperson of the Committee on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as well as the Committee on Foreign Affairs – Makiko Tanaka is a politician who was in power until December 2012, described by Momoyo Hüstebek in the chapter *Populist or Reformer? Tanaka Makiko*. It is an interesting choice for this publication, since Tanaka was not a first place politician in the Japanese government, but was well known for being the daughter of former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka. In my opinion it was a good selection of a female politician from Japan, a country which is still closed to the wide participation of women in politics, introducing a person from the leading politician’s family, who gained power in the

Japanese diet. Showing her in such a context, and presenting the polarized opinions about her makes this article worth reading.

The last woman presented in this publication is the ROK's president Park Geun-Hye. She is a democratically elected female politician in a country which is located on the 111st place of the The Global Gender Gap Index. She is also the daughter of ROK's president and military general Park Chung-Hee, which makes her situation similar to that of other females introduced in this publication. Special attention was paid to her popularity created by the Korean media and her being the daughter of a former president. During the preparation of the article by Momoyo Hüstebeck, Park was not the president of ROK. Therefore the choice of analyzing this person seemed to be a perfect one.

To conclude, the *Dynasties and Female Political Leaders in Asia. Gender, Power and Pedigree* book is worth recommending, mainly because of its broad selection of female political leaders around Asia, and the authors enjoying respect among Asia specialists. All chapters refer to each other, which enables the reader to gain a broad knowledge on this interesting theme.

Olga Barbasiewicz