

РЕЦЕНЗІЇ / REVIEWS

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FEMALE FACES OF THE POLISH KLIO IN A REGIONAL DIMENSION

(1945 – 1989) (a peer-review on the monograph: Kolbuszewska J. Kobiety na naukowym Olimpie? Łódzkie adeptki Klio w latach 1945 – 1989

[Women on the Way to Scientific Olympus? Lodz Adepts Klio in 1945 – 1989]. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2021. 270 s.)

ЖІНОЧІ ОБЛИЧЧЯ ПОЛЬСЬКОЇ КЛІО У РЕГІОНАЛЬНОМУ ВИМІРІ

(1945 – 1989) (рецензія на монографію: Kolbuszewska J. Kobiety na naukowym Olimpie? Łódzkie adeptki Klio w latach 1945 –1989 [Women on the scientific

Olympus? Lodz adepts Klio in the years 1945 – 1989]. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2021. 270 s.)

Due to the historical science development, during which changes in research paradigms take place, new scientific directions opened up before us more and more. Hence, there should be singled out the studies on women in science, in particular, in history among the “gender studies” focused on women’s issues in general. Lodz University Professor Jolanta Kolbuszewska devoted her another research on the issue of women in the Polish historical

science, as there has been her focus on the outlined issue for a long time. Jo. Kolbuszewska's activity was so fruitful in this direction. For example, as Jo. Kolbuszewska's monograph: "Women on the Way to Scientific Olympus" was heatedly discussed (2020), the author's next research was brought out, which was dedicated to the followers of Klio from the University of Lodz during the period of the Polish People's Republic.

The peer-reviewed monograph is a kind of continuation, an in-depth analysis, an illustration of what was discussed in the monograph "Women on the Way to Scientific Olympus...?". After all, if this monograph was devoted to the Polish women-historians scientific emancipation in general, and was chronologically and territorially extensive, then the one discussed lively nowadays is a more concise (but also deeper, more emotional) presentation of biographies and characteristics regarding scientific and career achievements of the representatives of one historiographical centre during the period of 1945–1989.

The heroes of this monograph were three generations of women, who managed to reach the highest career levels: "Reach, – according to the author, to the scientific Olympus" (although in the title of the monograph this phrase was formulated not as a statement, but as an interrogative sentence). There are eight essays about women scholars, who worked at the Institute of History of the University of Lodz: the first Professor Nataliya Gansiorowska-Grabowska (1881–1964), a scholar Halyna Evert-Kappesova (1898–1985) who specialized in the Byzantine, and the researchers who focused on the history of industry – Grizelda Missalova (1901–1978), people's movements – Helena Brodowska-Kubicz (1914–2003), historiography – Krystyna Srenowska (1914–2013) and Sofia Libyszowska (1918–2000), workers' movement – Barbara Varhowska (1929–2005), history of emigration – Alina Barszczewska-Krupu (1932–2001).

The prosopographic aspects of the female researchers' life were analysed in the monograph: education, scientific interests, career growth, organizational and teaching activities at the University and different levels of scientific institutions. Chief focus was on the scientific achievements of the heroines from the point of view of modern historiography. There was also the "private" history of these women, which was left in the memory of their family members, colleagues, and students. It should be noted that a characteristic feature and, obviously, one of the strongest aspects of all the works of the author, and this one in particular, was a broad depiction of contexts – changes in the political, socio-economic, cultural circumstances of a social life of the period under study.

A review of the monograph source base deserves a special focus. Since this monograph is a study that combines different areas of study, involvement of sources is very specific. In the source base we also come across a classic set of sources from the history of historical science, which is based on the scientific literature in which the works of the heroines themselves have a significant place. The reconstructions of female scholars professional formation are based on significant arrays of archival materials involvement from the University's activities (personal files, reports at various meetings, documents accompanying theses defenses, etc.). It was impossible to do the research without the sources of a personal origin: interviews, conversations and correspondence with employees and friends, graduates and family members of the heroines themselves as the memory of the heroines had a significant place in the research. Owing to the above-mentioned sources, the author managed to create a rather vivid image of these women, an alternative to the "official" one recorded in the anniversary texts, obituaries and posthumous memories. We should also note that due to the chronological and geographic brevity of the research subject, it was possible for Jo. Kolbuszewska to focus

not only on the formal issues of the didactics (the knowledge and skills that the researchers imparted to their students), but also on what values they promoted, their outlook, what kind of emotions were experienced.

The quality and quantity of collected information affected the nature of the story directly, all plots include three components: the issues on life and scientific career of female researchers, their achievements in science (in the context of modern reception), and the memory about them. As Jo. Kolbuszewska was a graduate of the University of Lodz, the story constructed by was influenced by her own experience of communicating with some of her heroines – the representatives of the second and third generations of female historians. The author frankly admitted that “despite the desire to be objective and fair to the historians, I wrote about some people (Krystyna Srenowska, Halyna Evert-Kappesova or Sofia Libyszowska) more colourfully, broadly and emotionally” (p. 10).

It is impossible to ignore another “hero” of Jo. Kolbuszewska’s research – the University of Lodz (in particular, its Institute of History), whose past became the background for presenting the specifics of the development of scientific careers of the female researchers. The author interpreted the University of Lodz as a kind of mirror in which the general phenomena and processes of higher education and scientific policy of the times of the Polish People’s Republic were reflected. The main question, which was formulated by Jo. Kolbuszewska was the question of how much a young, provincial but progressive University (which was also called “red”) could contribute to the scientific emancipation of women? The above-mentioned question also gave rise to a number of the following questions: how favourable was the University environment for the intellectual development, how conscious was the choice for the professional self-realization of this particular institution, what motivation was decisive in their choice? A comparison of defense statistics with data from other universities (for example, such “old” ones as Krakow and Warsaw) allowed the author to state that the atmosphere of the University of Lodz contributed to the scientific growth of women historians.

It was explained by the fact that since the establishment of this institution in 1945, its scientific environment had been open to women. In general, it was typical of “young” universities, since there was a rather acute post-war personnel shortage, which was solved at the expense of women. According to Jo. Kolbuszewska, also the newly established universities were less conservative in terms of gender in science and it was easier for women, who dreamed of a research career to start working there. Women’s emancipation was generally facilitated by state policy in the Polish People’s Republic aimed at overcoming inequality. However, science was considered to be a traditionally male “bastion”, did not pay much attention to the fact that women emancipation in a socialist society had to become a reality in all spheres.

The University turned out to be a place where women were not too hindered from advancing in the service. The consistency of research, dedication to work, contacts with other centres, etc., were promoted at the University traditionally. In addition, the researchers’ personal motivation for the scientific and career self-realization also played a role: “Strong women, capable of fighting for their position and the respect of their colleagues, showed activity in many areas, including those that seemed to be reserved for men” (p. 15). The factor of the individual in history was also present, because Jo. Kolbuszewska interpreted strong positions won by women historians at the University of Lodz as the result of the activities of the founder of the Institute of History, Natalia Gansiorowska-Grabowska. Hence, according to the author, the University in Łódź became a place for women historians where they could

realize their scientific ambitions, put their talent and efforts on the altar of Klio and prove the full right of women to engage in science.

The unique culmination of this monograph was the consideration of the problem of evaluating the scientific achievements of female researchers from Łódź, namely, the question of what new things they brought with their studies to the Polish historiography of the Polish People's Republic. Their scientific interests related to various sub-disciplines: from the history of Byzantium to the history of the peasant and labour movements and historiography, covered a wide range of problems and were so significant that they brought the University of Lodz out the status of "parochial and provincial". After all, owing to them, it turned out "that without ancient traditions, a significant scientific and library base and huge archives, but only owing to diligence, discipline and personal abilities, you can reach the scientific Olympus even if you are a woman, and even if you leave the province" (p. 15).

The end of the study was also clearly distinguished, in which, instead of the usual conclusions, we get a comparative description of the formal achievements in the field of history of employees of the University of Lodz during the Polish People's Republic – 8 women and 28 men. The following information could be found in the tables: data on the gender ratio of University employees, Heads of the Institute of History and the Historical and Philosophical Department, Heads of departments, as well as on the defenses of theses by men and women, and even the periods duration between their doctorates and habilitations. The author drew attention to the issue of scientific specialization of women, who were forced to occupy "niche" disciplines, or those who were just beginning their formation in Poland when summing up. Jo. Kolbuszewska did not avoid issues on the social origin of the political position of women in science, because it also affected career advancement in Sovietized Poland. And, in the end, one of the questions posed by the author concerned the discrepancies between women's and men's ways of "functioning" in science, which was expressed in a greater involvement of women in organizational and didactic work, as a result of which their purely scientific work suffered.

Taking everything into consideration, we should note that the covered study is an example of a successful mixing of genres, where at the junction of the history of historical science, "gender studies" and biographical studies (with elements of prosopographic studies) we observe the emergence of a living history of women in science, full of vivid images and deep analysis. In the case of Jo. Kolbuszewska's monograph, we deal with an interesting example of the application of theoretical ideas to a specific material. The original research model offered by the author, which outlines the topic of the history of women in science as fully as possible and from different perspectives, opens up new horizons of knowledge to us, provokes the emergence of discussions.

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