

Throughout the centuries ideas about women have been expressed in proverbs, the world's smallest literary genre. Mineke Schipper, professor of intercultural literary studies, Leiden University in the Netherlands, collected and studied proverbs about women originating from hundreds of languages and more than 150 countries. She wrote a book about this material entitled *Never Marry a Woman with Big Feet. Women in proverbs from Around the World* which has been translated into many languages (Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Turkish, German etc). Editions in other languages will be published (Brazil, Korea)

The website www.womeninproverbsworldwide.com has gone online. It gives access to Mineke Schipper's whole collection of more than 15 000 proverbs. The site can be searched on topics such as the female body, women's phases of life from girl to bride, wife, co-wife, mother, mother-in-law, widow, grandmother and old woman; basics of life such as love, sex, pregnancy, childbirth; women's work, her verbal talents and her power. More than a thousand metaphors about women can be found in the collection: women have been compared to a large variety of things from mimosa to lotus flower, melons and potato fields, cakes and other delicacies. One can search for all the above aspects and combinations of aspects on this user-friendly website. The site is interactive and people are invited to send proverbs originating from their own cultures.

In spite of cultural differences there are striking resemblances in the patterns of messages in this global legacy. The collection reflects fascinating, hilarious and sometimes shocking views of women and their status in cultures worldwide. Reading proverbs makes us aware of where we come from as men and women today, and helps us to find out where we want to go.