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#### BULYASH TODAEVA'S CONTRIBUTION TO STUDYING LANGUAGES AND CULTURES OF THE MONGOLIAN PEOPLES

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#### *Abstract*

Recently, cooperation in the political, economic, scientific, technical, military and cultural fields between Russia and China have been actively developing, which is very positively perceived in our country. The main factor stimulating the development of common interests of these two world's most powerful countries is undoubtedly a common approach to the problem of security. It is connected with the need to ensure the possibility of implementing plans for reforming all aspects of society's life, during the transition period in these countries. In 1955, for the first time, scientists of the USSR and PRC began to organize and conduct joint field researches and scientific expeditions. During the expeditions Chinese and Soviet specialists established contacts, shared work experience, overcoming the language barrier with the help of translators and studying Russian, Chinese, Mongolian and other languages. To this historical period of large-scale cooperation between the two countries belong the scientific and managerial activities of Bulyash Khoychievna Todaeva, a “soviet specialist” as she calls herself in her diary, the famous linguist, Mongolian researcher, a bright representative of one of the Mongolian peoples of Russia (Volga Kalmyks), descendants of the Oirats, who moved more than 400 years ago from Central Asia to Russia and connected their fate with it forever. It is proposed to evaluate the scientific contribution of the results of B. Todaeva's activities by the level of the scientific field, the content of which has changed as a result of her evaluated work.

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**Keywords:** Language, Mongolian studies, Bulyash Todaeva, Kalmyks, Oirat-Mongols, cultural heritage.



## **1. Introduction**

In the context of globalization, modern tendencies to the integration of cultures, the comprehension of the peculiarities of the spiritual culture of one or another ethnic group, its historical past is very important. The solution of internal regional ethnic problems is impossible without a proper study of language, history, religion, folklore and literary monuments. Scientists discuss the problem of inseparability of culture and language (Jiang, 2000; Kim, 2003; Leavitt, 2011; Sharifian, 2014; Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013), issues of the image and gender model of a person in language and culture of Mongolian-speaking people (Ochirova, 2019; Omakaeva, 2019). Therefore, it becomes obvious that each new stage of cultural and historical development requires a rethinking of the already existing cultural heritage. In this connection, the natural interest of scientists to the biography of a particular person, as a genre of scientific research, deserves attention. Multifaceted, perennial works of the famous orientalist B. Todaeva in the field of Mongolian studies is striking not only with a meaningful range, but also with the depth of understanding of problems in various branches of this field. The scientific heritage of B. Todaeva is a solid, essential layer of the spiritual culture of the Kalmyk people, the Oirat-Mongolian peoples of China and Mongolia. B. Todaeva is one of the Kalmyk scientists who have gone through difficult periods of life and career. She has made a great contribution to documenting the endangered languages of the Mongolian ethnic groups and ethnic groups of China (Janhunen, 2006). This is especially relevant today (Hale, 1992).

## **2. Problem Statement**

An integrated system approach to the study and evaluation of multidimensional activity of B. Todaeva provided the scientific novelty of the topic and its relevance, which is still undeveloped in domestic science.

## **3. Research Questions**

The scientific contribution includes two main components, namely the level of results and the benefits for Mongolistics and society.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to define the theoretical and methodological foundations of the scientific heritage of the scientist.

## **5. Research Methods**

The methodology of the research includes survey and observation; analysis, synthesis, and generalization; comparison, correlation, and analogy; induction, and deduction; analysis of scientific literature and documents; comparative historical analyses.

## 6. Findings

B. Kh. Todaeva was born on January 28, 1915 in the village of Iki-Manlan of the Maloderbetovskiy ulus of the Kalmyk steppe in the family of the poor herder Toda Khochiev. Her mother, Bain Chankaeva, was a skillful needlewoman with a delicate taste that was passed on to her daughter. After graduating in 1931 from Maloderbetovskiy secondary school, Bulyash worked as secretary of the district Komsomol committee, and later as a teacher at the Iki-Manlan elementary school. In 1938 she graduated with honors from the Astrakhan Pedagogical Institute, then worked as a teacher at the school, as a teacher at the Kalmyk Pedagogical Institute and at the Institute for the Advanced Training of Teachers in Elista. In 1941, in the direction of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan Bulyash goes to study in graduate school in Moscow. During the Great Patriotic War, she did not go with the institute to evacuate, but remained to work at a military factory. The defense of her thesis took place in 1946 on the topic "Semantics and syntactic functions of cases in Mongolian-Oirat dialects". After successfully defending B. Kh. Todaeva worked at the Institute of Language and Thinking of the USSR Academy of Sciences (1946–1950) and the Institute of Teaching Methods of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR (1948–1949). In 1951 the fundamental work of B. Kh. Todaeva under the title "The Grammar of the Modern Mongolian Language: Phonetics and Morphology", devoted to the literary Mongolian language (1951), was published in Moscow. This monograph is still assessed by experts as one of the most profound linguistic studies in Mongolistics.

One of the most interesting and fruitful periods in the life and scientific activity of B. Kh. Todaeva was work on the Soviet scientific expedition to the People's Republic of China (1954-1957). Her husband, a well-known orientalist G. P. Serdyuchenko, was sent to the China as an adviser on linguistics at the Academy of Sciences of the People's Republic of China (as cited in Shen, 2003). B. Todaeva was invited to work as a scientific consultant to the Academy of National Minorities.

B.Kh. Todaeva was and remains one of the pioneers of languages of the Mongolian ethnic groups of the PRC (as cited in Svantesson, 2013). Three years spent by a scholar in China were devoted to the study of the languages of the Mongolian people, and the reading lectures at Peking University. B.Kh. Todaeva was the first representative of the Kalmyk people who visited the Xinjiang Oirat Mongols in Soviet times.

Professor G. P. Serdyuchenko and B. Kh. Todaeva were the founders of the first Mongolian language department of the Academy of National Minorities of the People's Republic of China. B. Kh. Todaeva taught at the department a course on the modern Mongolian language (Todaeva, 1957). After the Soviet scientific expedition to the PRC (1954–1957) for a quarter of a century she worked at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. The unique material accumulated in scientific expeditions across the territory of China is reflected in the whole cycle of its fundamental scientific works: "Mongolian languages and dialects" (1960), "The language of the Mongols of Inner Mongolia. Materials and dictionary"(1981), "The language of the Mongols of Inner Mongolia. Essays on dialects" (1985). These and many other works published by B.Kh. Todaeva are a significant contribution to the national and world Mongolian science.

The last decades of B. Kh. Todaeva's life, despite her advanced age, were marked by a new upsurge of creative forces. The theme of the Kalmyk "Dzhangariada" was one of the priorities in the research

activities of the scientist. The result of many years of hard work was the fundamental work “The Dictionary of the Oirats of Xinjiang” (according to the versions of the songs “Djanger”) (Todaeva, 2001).

B. Kh. Todaeva completed in 1990s colossal work and published it in 3 volumes in cooperation with KIGI RAS under the title “Djanger. The heroic epic of the Xinjiang Oirat Mongols”, consisting of 70 epic songs, shifted from the Oirat “clear script” to the modern Kalmyk language. This publication allows to expand significantly the research in the field of studying epos, provides new opportunities. In this work, as well as in her many other writings, the fundamental nature of knowledge, thoroughness and high professionalism are especially evident.

Another fundamental work, based on materials of field expeditions in China and Kalmykia, is the work of Todayeva (2007) “Proverbs and sayings of Kalmyks of Russia and Oirats of Xinjiang (China)”. The book contains the best examples of Kalmyk proverbs, sayings and riddles, as well as folklore texts recorded by the author among the Oirats of Xinjiang.

The book by Todaeva (2012) “On Scientific Work in the People's Republic of China”, published by KIGI RAS in 2012, includes diary entries that the author kept in 1954–1957 during the expedition to China. It provides unique information about the work carried out by the Academy of National Minorities and Peking University to prepare the creation of writing for the national minorities of the country, drawing up a map of the distribution of dialects of the Mongolian language, creating a department of the Mongolian language in the academy, etc. The scientist’s records contain valuable information about the field work: trips, meetings, conversations, and records of materials on the Mongolian languages represented on the territory Itaya. The expedition for study the Mongolian languages of Inner Mongolia and Central China was organized by the Academy of National Minorities, one of the expedition groups was led by B. Todaeva. B. Kh. Todaeva’s diary is of great interest to researchers. It covers the history of the Soviet-Chinese relations, which is also a kind of valuable evidence of the political, social and scientific cooperation of two countries in the 1950s and 1960s. It is gratifying that now two great power countries (Russia and China) together intend to implement the program “One Belt and One Road” for the benefit of their peoples and the peoples of other countries.

From the historic review of exchange and cooperation between Chinese and Soviet Academy of Sciences more than half a century ago, most of the Soviet experts working in CAS passed away (Zhang, 2013).

When we received the sad news about the death B.Kh. Todaeva in 2014, the book "Oirat Geser" was in print. The heroic epic of the Xinjiang Oirats, which includes the lyrics of 12 epic songs, was published in China in 1990. It was transcribed by her into the Cyrillic alphabet. Thanks to the work of B. Todaeva, we can get acquainted with a sample of the richest epic heritage of the Mongolian people. The publication is very relevant: for the first time a large cycle of epic songs about Geser was introduced into scientific circulation. Thanks to this publication, it is possible to raise the question of the fact that among the Kalmyks “Geser” was preserved in writing form and in fairy tales. The famous epic was widely spoken orally.

The Kalmyk Institute of Humanitarian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with which B. Kh. Todaeva actively collaborated in the last years of her life, received numerous letters and telegrams of condolence sent from scientific centers of Russia, Mongolia, China. The tribute to the memory of B.

Todaeva was shifted to her last work on the translation into modern Kalmyk the novel of the Xinjiang writer Kenzya "Before Dawn".

The fundamental works of B.Kh. Todaeva made an invaluable contribution to the national and world humanities. Her works were translated into foreign languages in PRC, Mongolia, Hungary, etc. B.Kh. Todaeva published 20 books, dictionaries and monographs. Thanks to her fundamental scientific works, she is now on a par with the greatest Mongolists of the twentieth century, such as G.D. Sanzheev (1902-1982), T.A. Bertagayev (1905-1976), E.R. Tenishev (1921-2004).

For her achievements and merits B.Kh. Todaeva was awarded the Order of Friendship of Peoples., In recognition of her efforts to introduce the results into wide practice, she was decorated with another Badge of Honour order, medals of the USSR and the People's Republic of China, honorary titles (Honorary Member of the Society of Mongolists of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Honorary Citizen of the Republic of Kalmykia, Honored Scientist of the Republic of Kalmykia, etc..

## 7. Conclusion

We describe several periods of B. Todaeva's biography. There are many, often different, positions of Mongolists. Today it is important to give a synthesis of their results for a common vision for the future of Mongolian studies. B. Todaeva's views do not reflect only specific problems within Mongolistics but should be seen as pointers to directions in which Oriental studies could and should develop in future research contexts, particularly with regard to the rapidly changing global context.

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