Buryad dialects: what has been studied and what is yet to be studied

(The study of Buryad dialects: past and prospects)

Zhargal Badagarov

(Buryad State University, Ulaan-Ude)

Local dialects of a language have proven to be a major source of basic linguistic data to be analyzed in the framework of historical studies. Buryad, a northern Mongolic language spoken in the vast territories of the northernmost parts of Inner Asia, is known to be dialectally very   diverse. The reasons for this diversity are beyond the scope of the present paper.

First, the author briefly outline past fieldwork and research activity conducted on the Buryad dialects, providing critical analysis of several known classifications. The author then proposes a roadmap for further studies in this field and looks at possible outcomes of related linguistic studies.

Buryad dialects emerged as a subject for scientific interest as early as the middle of the 19th century in M.A. Castren's work. The large-scale study of Buryad dialects was not conducted until the Soviet period. Though it was ideologically influenced by general political trends of the Communist era, linguists must be grateful for the plethora of linguistic data collected, some of which has not yet been published.

The linguistic phenomena evidenced by Buryad dialects in the past continue to exist and develop. Advances in linguistic science and modern information technologies put before us the need to organize the data collected by our predecessors, recollecting if necessary, to create electronic resources facilitating scholarly research. Further stages include but are not limited to the research in historical phonetics, grammar, lexicology of Mongolic, and compilation of a dialectological dictionary.