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THE SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES OF Y.K. BETGER AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

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Abstract

This article analyzes the scholarly activities of Yevgeniy Karlovich Betger in the fields of Oriental Studies, historiography, and bibliography. It examines his bibliographic legacy, his role in the formation of the scientific and cultural environment of Turkestan, and his scientific and practical contributions to the development of librarianship and the bibliographic system in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the results of the studies conducted by Y.K. Betger are analyzed on the basis of various historical and scholarly sources.

Keywords: Y.K. Betger, history, orientalist, research, article, manuscript, index, historiography, bibliography, library, Central Asia, Turkestan, Uzbekistan.

Yevgeniy Karlovich Betger (1887–1956), an Honored Scientist of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a distinguished bibliographer, and a library scholar, continues to occupy a prominent place in the history of Oriental bibliography, librarianship, and cultural-educational development. He is recognized not only as a leading specialist of his time but also as a scholar who made a significant contribution to the establishment and development of the scientific bibliographic school [1].

Yevgeniy Karlovich Betger was born on June 30, 1887**,** in the city of Tashkent into an educated German family that had migrated from Prussia. His father, Karl Bogdanovich Betger**,** was a pharmacist who managed the main pharmacy in Tashkent for a quarter of a century. His mother, Anna Vasilyevna, was an educated, highly cultured, and intellectually accomplished woman. The intellectual and educational atmosphere within the family played a significant role in fostering Betger's interest in scholarship and scientific inquiry [2]. Y.K. Betger developed into a well-educated intellectual through a comprehensive academic training. In 1906, he enrolled in the Faculty of History and Philology at Moscow University. However, due to the suspension of academic activities following the revolutionary events of 1905, he moved to Heidelberg in the autumn of 1906 and was admitted to the Department of History within the Faculty of Philosophy at the local university. After studying in Germany for three years, Betger returned to Russia and continued his education at the Faculty of History and Philology of Kyiv University. In 1914, he successfully graduated from this higher educational institution.

From 1920 to 1924, Betger completed a full course of studies in Oriental disciplines and, in 1924, received a diploma from the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Central Asian State University (now the National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek). He developed innovative approaches to working with rare publications and manuscripts. He introduced a new classification system for selected rare materials and compiled their catalogs. In addition, he was actively engaged in the study of book publishing history and the scholarly description of printed works.

Yevgeniy Karlovich Betger was one of the most prominent scholars who made a substantial contribution to the development of bibliography, library science, and Oriental studies in Central Asia. His academic activities were closely connected with the study of the history, culture, and manuscript heritage of Turkestan. His work in compiling bibliographic indexes, investigating historical sources, and providing scholarly descriptions of Oriental manuscripts holds significant scientific value. Betger's scholarly legacy continues to serve as an important resource for researchers working in the fields of Oriental studies and historiography.

Bibliography constitutes an essential component of scholarly activity, as any scientific research begins with a thorough examination of existing literature. The establishment of libraries and information centers, the development of bibliographic services, effective planning and coordination, the scientific organization of professional work, and the provision of access to information are all fundamental for meeting society's informational needs. In this regard, Betger's contributions played an important role in the advancement of the bibliographic and library system in Uzbekistan and Central Asia [3].

A significant portion of Y.K. Betger's scholarly legacy is devoted to the bibliography of Central Asia. One notable example is his work entitled ***"A*** Chronological Survey of Russian Books of the Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries Held in the Alisher Navoi State Library of Uzbekistan (1581–1800)"**,** which contains bibliographic descriptions of 250 publications.

The final three volumes of the Turkestan Collection (Volumes 592–594) were also compiled under the supervision of the librarian and bibliographer Y.K. Betger. These works demonstrate his substantial contribution to the preservation, systematization, and scholarly study of the documentary and bibliographic heritage of Central Asia[4]**.**

Particularly, the newspaper *Turkestanskie Vedomosti* and the exceptionally rare *Turkestan Collection* remained at the center of Betger's scholarly interests throughout his career. He compiled bibliographic indexes of both the newspaper and the collection, leaving behind an invaluable scholarly legacy for future generations. In these works, the source studies scholar prepared a comprehensive index of articles published between 1870 and 1892.

The final three volumes of the *Turkestan Collection* (Volumes 592, 593, and 594) were compiled by Y.K. Betger in 1939. Volumes 417–591 of the collection were devoted to the history of countries neighboring the Turkestan region. Together with the scholar O. Maslova, Betger prepared a 272-page index for the collection, significantly enhancing its accessibility and scholarly value for researchers.

In 1941, Betger was appointed Deputy Director for Research, a position he held until 1944. In 1943, he defended his Candidate of Sciences dissertation at the Faculty of History of the Central Asian State University (SAGU). His dissertation was based on A.I. Butakov's Diary as well as the admiral's encrypted correspondence written in French, English, and Swedish. The prominent scholar Academician A.A. Semenov described this research as "a remarkable act of scholarly courage." This assessment reflects Betger's dedication, perseverance, and intellectual bravery in the study of complex historical sources [5].

Between 1947 and 1949, Betger also worked at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, where he prepared descriptions of more than 300 manuscripts authored by Central Asian scholars writing in Arabic. Some of these manuscripts were later included in the *Collection of Oriental Manuscripts of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR*.

In addition, he prepared for publication a Russian language textbook entitled *Prepositional Constructions in the Russian Language* for students of Uzbek-language groups (typescript edition, Tashkent, 1953, 143 pages).

Betger published numerous scholarly articles in the academic publications of the Academies of Sciences of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, as well as in the journals *Star of the East* and *Oriental Epigraphy*, and in various newspapers. He also compiled and edited bibliographic indexes and prepared chronological surveys of old Russian and rare books preserved in the Rare Books Departments of the SAGU Fundamental Library and the Alisher Navoi State Library.

One of Y.K. Betger's notable contributions was the establishment of a collection of rare and ancient books, which led to the creation of a special department. He personally headed this department from 1948 to 1956. Yevgeniy Karlovich's principal efforts were devoted to the study and description of the rare collection.

His multifaceted activities within the Turkestan Geographical Society and the Turkestan Circle of Amateur Archaeologists brought him into close contact with many like-minded individuals who were deeply committed to studying and promoting the history of their native land [6].

V.K. Betger's multifaceted activities played a significant role in the formation and development of local history bibliography in Turkestan and Central Asia. These activities further demonstrate the breadth of Betger's scholarly interests and his substantial contribution to manuscript studies, bibliography, library science, and the preservation of the documentary and cultural heritage of Central Asia[7].

In conclusion, Y.K. Betger's scholarly legacy encompasses a wide range of issues related to the bibliographic and historical past of Turkestan. His articles devoted to local history bibliography, book studies, historical source studies, Oriental studies, and other fields, as well as his organizational activities and service as Director of the Turkestan Public Library, Head of a division of the Society for the Study of Turkestan, member of the Turkestan Branch of the Russian Geographical Society, and honorary member of the Departments of Archaeology and Oriental Studies at the State University, represent only some of the many facets of Y.K. Betger's biography.

The scholar's bibliographic work played an important role in the systematization and study of scientific heritage, while his research in the fields of Oriental studies and historiography served as a valuable source for understanding the cultural and historical development of the peoples of Central Asia. Y.K. Betger's rich scholarly legacy continues to retain its significance today as a relevant and valuable resource for academic research.

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