



ILM-FAN MUAMMOLARI TADQIQOTCHILAR TALQINIDA

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RESPUBLIKA ILMIY KONFERENSIYASI

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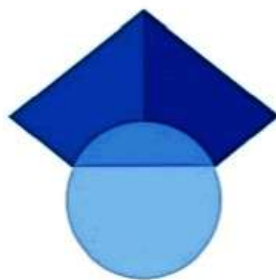


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PEARL BUCK'S CONTRIBUTION TO UNDERSTANDING EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURES

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Abstract: This article examines Pearl S. Buck's significant contribution to fostering mutual understanding between Eastern and Western cultures. Through her literary works, especially her depictions of Chinese society, Buck bridged cultural gaps, challenged stereotypes, and encouraged dialogue. Her writing not only highlighted the richness of Eastern traditions but also explored universal human experiences, making her a crucial figure in cross-cultural literature and intercultural communication.

Keywords: Pearl Buck, East-West relations, cultural understanding, Chinese literature, intercultural dialogue, cross-cultural literature

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck, an American author and Nobel laureate, is renowned for her profound ability to interpret and communicate the complexities of both Eastern and Western cultures. Her life and work are a testament to the possibility of genuine cross-cultural understanding in a world too often divided by misunderstanding and prejudice. Born in 1892 in Hillsboro, West Virginia, Buck spent much of her childhood and early adulthood in China, where her parents served as missionaries. This early immersion in Chinese culture played a pivotal role in shaping her worldview and later, her literary career.

Unlike many Westerners of her time, Buck's approach to China was neither patronizing nor superficial. She grew up speaking both English and Chinese, and her friendships, daily routines, and worldview were deeply influenced by her surroundings in Zhenjiang. This intimate exposure enabled her to observe not only

the surface differences between East and West but also the underlying commonalities of human experience.

Buck's most famous novel, **"The Good Earth"** (1931), serves as a bridge between cultures. Through the life story of Wang Lung, a humble Chinese farmer, Buck opened a window for Western readers into the struggles, hopes, and values of rural Chinese society. Her sympathetic and realistic portrayals stood in stark contrast to the Orientalist stereotypes common in Western literature of the time. Instead of exoticizing Chinese people, Buck depicted them as fully human, with dignity and complexity. **"The Good Earth"** not only won the Pulitzer Prize but also sparked widespread interest in Chinese culture across the United States and Europe.

Beyond her literary style, Buck's personal philosophy furthered cultural understanding. She believed that literature was a powerful tool for breaking down barriers. In her essays and speeches, she often emphasized the importance of empathy and the willingness to listen. Buck argued that differences in language, religion, or custom should not obscure the fundamental unity of human experience. For her, the struggles of Chinese farmers and the hopes of American families were not so different. She once wrote, "The basic problems of human beings are the same everywhere—love and hunger and work and hope and fear."

Buck's deep respect for Chinese culture did not blind her to its challenges, nor did her American background prevent her from critiquing the shortcomings of her own society. Her balanced perspective earned her both admirers and critics in both the East and the West. Yet, it is precisely this nuanced view that made her work so valuable. She neither romanticized nor demonized either culture but sought to illuminate each in the eyes of the other.

Another important aspect of Buck's legacy is her advocacy for intercultural adoption and humanitarian causes. Her own experiences as a bicultural individual inspired her lifelong dedication to helping orphaned and marginalized children, especially those of mixed race, who often faced discrimination in both societies. By founding organizations like Welcome House, Buck translated her belief in cultural understanding into concrete action.

Pearl Buck's influence did not stop with her early literary success or with "The Good Earth." Throughout her life, she remained an active voice for intercultural understanding, social justice, and literary innovation. Her later works, essays, and humanitarian activities further strengthened her position as a bridge between East and West.

After winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1938—the first American woman to receive this honor—Buck gained even greater international prominence. The Nobel Committee praised her "rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China and for her biographical masterpieces." Buck used her platform to speak out against racism, discrimination, and war. She argued passionately that the world could not afford to remain divided by cultural ignorance or prejudice.

Buck's books, including **"Sons," "A House Divided," "East Wind: West Wind,"** and others, continued to explore the tensions and possibilities inherent in encounters between Chinese and Western values. She tackled issues such as family, tradition, gender roles, and modernization, often focusing on how ordinary people adapted to rapid change. In her memoirs and articles, Buck reflected on her own bicultural upbringing, highlighting both the pain and the privilege of living between worlds.

One of Buck's most lasting contributions was her advocacy for children—especially those marginalized by racial or cultural difference. In 1949, she founded the Welcome House adoption agency, which specialized in placing mixed-race and Asian children with families in the United States. Buck understood that prejudice often grew out of ignorance, and she believed that bringing people together could foster understanding. Her work in this area was groundbreaking and continues to influence intercultural adoption practices today.

Buck also established the Pearl S. Buck Foundation (now called Pearl S. Buck International), which provides aid, education, and advocacy for children and families around the world. Her humanitarian work reflected her conviction that genuine cultural understanding required practical action as well as words.

Critics sometimes faulted Buck for being "too Western" for Chinese readers or "too Chinese" for Western ones. Yet her very ability to speak across cultural lines is what made her unique. She helped Western readers see Chinese society not as something distant or exotic but as a place where people experienced universal joys and sorrows. At the same time, she encouraged Asian audiences to reflect on their own traditions through fresh eyes.

In conclusion, Pearl Buck's role in building bridges between East and West cannot be overstated. Her writings and humanitarian work offered a vision of a world enriched, rather than divided, by cultural diversity. She taught that literature could be a powerful tool for peace and understanding—lessons that remain essential as we seek harmony in an increasingly complex global society.

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