

Development of ethnography in Kalmykia in XX century

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Abstract: in this research the development of ethnography in Kalmykia of XX century is analyzed. It is noticed that in the reviewed period the ethnography had come a long way from a simple description of life of contemporaries to a scientific analyses of ethnogenesis and ethnic history, evolution of material and spiritual culture of the Kalmyks. The authors paid attention to works, which are significant milestones in research of various problems of Kalmyk ethnography. As required the authors were beyond the timeframe. This research is based on using of wide range of literature.

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Introduction.

Ethnographical problems of the history of the Kalmyk people relate to acute issues of modern scientific research, although it should be noticed that the research of Kalmykia in the historical and ethnographic aspect attracted the attention of professional scientists since long time. Since the end of XVIII century the scholars I.I. Lepyokhin [1], P.S. Pallas [2] and I.G. Georgy [3] presented neat descriptions of their travels and left valuable information about the Kalmyk people. In the XIX century the Russian scholars and other intellectuals continued the research of Kalmykia. Such ethnographers and descriptors of life were N.I. Strakhov [4], N.A. Nefediev [5], F.A. Buller [6], P.I. Nebolsin [7] and others. Significant group of researches contained works of Orthodox missionaries: Methodius (N. Lvovskiy) [8], Ya. P. Dubrova [9] and Gury (Stepanov) [10]. Regional ethnographers I.G. Cherkasov [11], I.V. Bentkovskiy [12] devoted some of their works to the research of Kalmyks of the Stavropol and the Astrakhan provinces.

A particular role in the research of the Kalmyk ethnography is played by I.A. Zhitetskiy [13], who published in 1892 his book “Astrakhan Kalmyks” as a result of his research. A common feature of these works was the description by contemporaries of the material and spiritual culture of the Kalmyks. Pre-revolutionary researchers, travelers and observers of the Kalmyk life paid attention mainly to characteristics of clothing, homes, Buddhist religious buildings, some elements of nomadic farming and of the Kalmyk life. Sometimes a simple fixation without a proper analysis of the facts led some authors to the idealization of the patriarchal relations what led to misinterpretation of the actual socio-economic relations of the Kalmyk steppe,

which were shown more simplistic than they really were. In foreign historiography of the XX century A. Getti [14], Pollitzer [15], Rubel [16] and Okada [17] paid attention to the various aspects of the Mongolian, including the Kalmyk ethnography.

The main part. In the post-revolutionary period the development of the ethnological science of Kalmykia was mainly due to the researcher Ulyumdzhi Dushanovich Dushan (1892-1974), who, being a doctor by profession, was an editor of the regional newspaper “Ulan Khamg” and of the magazine “Oirat News” in 1920s. During his work as editor he published a lot of valuable materials on characterization of customs and rituals of the Kalmyks. Researchers do not doubt the correctness of works by U. Dushan because he was a direct witness of the event he described. For many years U.D. Dushan researched the life, customs and rituals of the Kalmyks and gathered a wealthy factual material about the conjugal relationship of the Kalmyks, their relation to phenomena of nature, to animal world, about customs, rituals and traditions of the Kalmyks. In 1928 his first book “Harmful traditions and superstitions of the Kalmyks and its control” was published [18]. Later in 1930s Ulyumdzhi Dushanovich composed his manuscript «Customs, rituals and traditions of life of the Kalmyks in late XIX – early XX century» [19]. These works became the first generalizing works in the research of rituals and customs among the Kalmyks in the history of Kalmykia.

The Stalinist repressions of 1930s followed by the illegal elimination of the Kalmyk republic as a part of the Soviet Union and forced deportation of the Kalmyk people in 1943 caused the backlog of the Kalmyk science for more than 30 years. There have been some positive changes in the Kalmyk science

since the end of 1950s after the return of the Kalmyks to their homes.

In 1960-1970s the Kalmyk research institute of language, literature and history and the Kalmyk state university where the whole galaxy of scholars and ethnographers worked became the centers for ethnological researches of Kalmykia. In the initial period the Kalmyk ethnography developed by efforts of scholars from other areas of science, in particular historians, archeologists, linguists and others. Thus U.E. Erdniev became one of the pioneers of the resurgent science. He played a very important role in the formation of the ethnography as the scientific aspect and now he is being considered deservedly as the founder of the Kalmyk ethnography. The first work of U.E. Erdniev devoted to the problems of the specificity of the material culture was the article "Food and drinks of the Kalmyks" where the author researches features of food of nomadic people [20]. Turning to analyzing of ethnic groups U.E. Erdniev noticed different nature of the origin of their names: ethnonyms ascending to tribal division and to real ancestors and toponymes etc. The scholar paid attention to ethnogenetical contacts of the Oriats and the Kalmyks, conducted a comparative analysis of the ethnic composition, determined the pure Mongolian components and referred the emergence of distinct ethnic groups of the Kalmyks to definite periods of interethnic relations with Turkic peoples. The result of many years of work was the monographic research "Kalmyks. Historical and ethnographical essays" published in 1970 [21].

In 1970s ethnological researches developed further when young scholars came to science. Those were specialists trained in universities and research institutes of Moscow and Leningrad, and among them were A.G. Mitirov, G.O. Avliaev, D.D. Shalkhakov, V.P. Darbakova, T.B. Badmaeva, G.M. Krasilnikova and others. In time these scholars laid the solid foundation of the ethnography of Kalmykia.

Exactly as a result of the ethnological research in 1970s the first major general works on the material and spiritual culture of the Kalmyk people were written. So during that period A.G. Mitirov researched the fine art of the Kalmyk people and as a result of this research he defended his dissertation "The fine art of the Mongolian people as a source of the problem of ethnogenesis" [22]. G.O. Avliaev was the first to research the ethnic history of the Kalmyks. He wrote a number of articles and successfully defended his dissertation "The ethnic composition and the resettlement of the Volga Kalmyks in the late XIX - early XX centuries" in 1975 [23]. N. Sh. Tashninov made a significant contribution to the researching of processes of cultural changes and education in Kalmykia of the XX century [24]. One

of the first researchers of the problems of family and marriage of the Kalmyks was D.D. Shalkhakov who defended his dissertation on theme "Family and marriage among the Kalmyks in the XIX – early XX centuries (historical-ethnographic research)" in 1977 [25]. Traditional way of life, rituals and anthroponomy of the Kalmyks became the main target of the research conducted by V.P. Darbakova who researched the Kalmyk naming rituals in her works [26]. The first researcher of the Kalmyk folk dancing was the scientist T.B. Badmaeva [27]. The Kalmyk national clothes were researched by G.M. Krasilnikova, who showed the ethnic specificity of the Kalmyk traditional costume in a number of her works [28].

In 1980s ethnologists began to expand the field of their researches which was due to the result of extensive field researches. In 1970 - 80s they went on expeditions to the villages of the republic where some interesting information about folk customs and rituals, folk festivals, ethnic groups, toponomy and onomastics was collected. Thus the book by D.D. Shalkhakov "Family and marriage of the Kalmyks" [29] published in 1982 researches family and material relations, family rituals and education of youth. In his work the author consciously limited himself to the chronological framework of the XIX – the early XX centuries due the fact that this period is represented by the sources with the most complete reflection of traditional forms of family and marital relations of the Kalmyks. Using some rather convincing facts D.D. Shalkhakov showed the major forms of family and marriage of the Kalmyks which laid the basis for further researches on the theme.

One of the characteristic features of the ethnology since the late 1980s was the research of the spiritual culture and local ethnic groups of Kalmyks in wide ethnic and cultural aspect. This was due to the fact that by the end of 80 - 90s a new generation of ethnographers trained in Moscow and Leningrad such as E.P. Bakaeva, E.-B. M. Guchinova, Z. E.-G. Gogoldanova and others appeared in Kalmykia.

During that period studying Buddhism in Kalmykia was the main target of the research conducted by E.P. Bakaeva who after defending her candidate dissertation "Lamaism in Kalmykia of the XVII – early XX centuries" was the first to consider the specificity of ethnic forms of Tibetan Buddhism in Kalmykia which was formed with the elements of pre-Buddhist beliefs, traditions and ideas included in the Buddhist ritual system [30]. E.-B. M. Guchinova who defended her dissertation "Modern family rituals" in 1989 began to research the life cycle rituals [31]. Z. E.-G. Gogoldanova conducted research on sub-ethnic groups of the Kalmyks, their ideas and values, using interdisciplinary connections.

In 1994 she defended her dissertation “Sub-ethnic and ethnic processes in Kalmykia in the mid 1980s (based on statistical and ethnological survey)” [32].

Since 1990s the theme of ethnographic researches in Kalmykia expanded and became actual, some problems and periods of the ethnic history, ethno-cultural development, moments of everyday life, problems of religious studies and of the development of the traditional culture of Kalmyks being under research. The most famous works reflecting that tendency were created by A.G. Mitirov, G.O. Avliaev, T.B. Badmaeva, E.P. Bakaeva and others.

Thus in 1990s – 2000s the scholar A.G. Mitirov gathered ethnographic material on the spiritual and material culture of the Kalmyks and published a number of monographs such as “Following the findings and losses: historical essays” [33]; “Oirat Kalmyks: ages and generations”[34]; «Sources» [35]. In 2000 the map of the ethnic composition of the Kalmyk uluses and “Family Tree of the Kalmyk people” by A.G. Mitirov were published as separate editions .

The first generalizing work on ethnic history of the Kalmyks was the book “The Origin of the Kalmyk people (the mid IX – first quarter of the XVIII centuries)” by G.O. Avliaev published in 1994 [36]. This book is the result of his work on his doctoral dissertation “ The origin of the Kalmyk people (mid IX – I quarter of the XVIII centuries)”, which he defended in 1994. The author considered almost all major ethnical groups of the Kalmyks.

In 1992 the above-mentioned monograph by T.B. Badmaeva about the Kalmyk dances was published, being the first work on this theme. The materials collected during scientific expeditions conducted regularly since 1975 and during which the information about traditional dances, their significance and meaningful sense was collected were the main source of this research. In this research the author for the first time restored the Kalmyk dance terminology and design characteristics and revealed the features of Oirat dances, which in ancient time consisted of a variety of movements of body rather than of movements of feet.

The research of the religious specificity of the Kalmyk society resulted in publication of the monograph by E. P. Bakaeva “Buddhism in Kalmykia. Historical and ethnographical essays” in 1994 [37]. Further on, the research of problems of ethnic specificity of national forms of Buddhism, which began in previous publications of E.P. Bakaeva, was reflected in the research of traditional early beliefs of the Kalmyks. As a result of her research the monograph “Pre-Buddhist beliefs of the Kalmyks” [38] was published in 2005, where the

author basing on field researches showed convincingly the persistence of traditional beliefs among the Kalmyks.

In recent years the Kalmyk scholars have prepared and published the “Selected works” by A.G. Mitirov [39] as well as the generalizing work “The Kalmyks” edited in series “Peoples and cultures” [40]. The monographs by N.V. Balinova [41], T.I. Sharaeva [42] and S.G. Batyeva are of great interest [43]. As for the researches published abroad for the last 20 years, the works by A. Bormanzhinov [44], E. Fridman [45] and the article by E. Omakaeva about the Kalmyk traditional medicine should be mentioned [46].

Conclusions.

Currently the Kalmyk Institute for Humanities Research of the Russian Academy of Science (formerly KNIYALI) and the Kalmyk state university remain the centers of ethnology. The research staff is working on the implementation of a large project “Traditional and modern ethnography of Kalmykia” and during this work the problems of not only researching of migratory habits of culture of the Kalmyks, but also problems of interference of different cultures are solved.

In general, it should be admitted that the ethnography of Kalmykia achieved significant results despite the difficulties and Stalinist repressions, difficulties of transition periods, changing of ideological concepts and political priorities. In the XIX-XX centuries researchers collected a considerable amount of sources, examined a large range of issues of ethnic history, the basic elements of the material and spiritual culture of Kalmyks. In the 1990s – 2000s researchers began to analyze the current issues of ethnic identity, neglected elements of the traditional culture. The researching into the processes of cultural interaction, the specificity of the local ethnic groups, the formation of ethnic identity remains relevant as well.

Gratitudes.

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