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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE OF NOMADIC FOREIGNERS IN THE
SOUTH OF RUSSIA

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Abstract

The subject of this article is the oath of allegiance to the service as a traditional element of the state political system, which sought to ensure confidence in the allegiance of both the population as the sovereign subjects, and, to a particular extent, employees of governing bodies at all levels. South of Russia is a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional region of the empire; acts as a buffer zone and ensures the security of its central part. The crucial strategic importance of the territory inhabited by nomadic peoples, who preserve certain elements of traditional government, determined special attention to the foreign administration employees among the Kalmyks, Nogais and Turkmen. Meanwhile, the procedure for taking the oath by these persons was not fully regulated at the legislative level. In the course of the study, the authors focus on the semantic content and structure of the oath text. The oath content, filled with ethnic self-consciousness and religious outlook, in accordance with the identity of the person who oaths, fully corresponded to the goals and objectives of the ideology and state policy. In conclusion, the authors deduced that the oath of allegiance to the service took a special place in the concept of imperial policy on the regional outskirts. The policy was developed in the process of its implementation and largely depended on the prevailing circumstances, but it contained an aspiration for their final integration into the all-Russian space by all means.

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1. Introduction

The oath and its varieties have passed a long way of formation and development in the history of the Russian state as a traditional element of the political system, enshrined by the legislator in normative legal acts. This element allowed maintaining the institutions' confidence in the loyalty of certain subjects, namely, political process participants. In the event that such subjects are entire peoples accepting the state citizenship, the oath promise plays a crucial role. Making an oath of allegiance to contractual relations was expressed in the form of *shert* in the practice of late medieval Russia. The legalization of the loyalty oath promise to military service took place on April 26, 1715 in the publication of “Military article” (Mankov, 1986). The swearing of an oath of allegiance to the service was also carried out for the first time by Peter's decree on June 19, 1719 “On the oath of allegiance to service” (Imperial Majesty's Chancellery, 1830a). The decree “On the establishment of an oath for each rank” was issued on November 10, 1721. According to its provisions, the oath of allegiance was taken every time when receiving a new rank for both civilian and military officials, as well as clergy (Imperial Majesty's Chancellery, 1830b).

The procedure for swearing in oath of allegiance to the service to the Sovereign and the Fatherland in military units was contained in the annex to Art. 6 “Code of Military Regulations” of 1869s edition (Imperial Majesty's Chancellery, 1907). The legislator provided for the oath promises texts for people of both Christian and other faiths, prepared in the Jagatai-Tatar and Aderbijan-Turkic dialects, as well as in Turkish, Persian and Arabic. The oath text was drawn up on a sheet, divided into three vertical parts: the text in the first column was in Russian, in the second – in one of the five indicated languages in Cyrillic, and in the third – using the writing of the chosen language. The state controlled all stages of taking the oath, primarily the content.

2. Problem Statement

The involvement of representatives of non-ethnic population in the civil service in the administrative executive and regulatory bodies was accompanied by taking an oath of allegiance to the service. An analysis of the recordkeeping documentation of the Governance of the Kalmyk people of the Astrakhan province and the Office of the Chief Bailiff of nomadic peoples of the Stavropol province suggests that the appearance of nomadic peoples' representatives in the service is noted only from the second quarter of the 19th century, and in the overwhelming majority in the positions of translators, interpreters and clerks. The process specification, except for its necessity mention, was not reflected in any regulatory legal acts.

3. Research Questions

The institution of the oath of allegiance to service, in contrast to *shert* relations, having become the research subject by a number of scholars (Kurapov, 2018; Moiseev, 2014, 2015; Tepkeev, 2013), has not gained sufficient development in Russian historiography. The legal method for foreigners to become citizens of the Russian Emperor has repeatedly attracted the historians' attention (Stashchak, 2013), as

well as a military oath of allegiance to a certain type of troops (Bend, 2009). Judicial oath has been developed to a large extent (Arapov, 2002; Dingelshedt, 1896). Unfortunately, the institution of the oath of allegiance to the civil service by representatives of the non-ethnic population has not received proper development, which has led to the research relevance.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the paper is to study the oath of allegiance to service in the system of governance of nomadic peoples in southern Russia, using the example of Kalmyks, Nogai and Turkmens in the 19th – early 20th centuries in the context of imperial policy towards the non-ethnic population of the regional outskirts of Russia.

5. Research Methods

The article is a continuation of our work in socio-political history of the nomadic peoples of the South of Russia. Certain aspects of taking the oath promise have already been considered by us (Lidzhieva, 2015, 2016). The reconstructive method, which made it possible to restore particular facts and events of the ritual moment process of taking an oath promise of allegiance to service in the system of governance of nomadic peoples in southern Russia, was used within the framework of the article. The statistical method was determined to analyze the regulatory legal acts adjusting the procedure for taking the oath in the Russian Empire during the studied period. The comparative approach has led to the identification of general trends and specific patterns.

6. Findings

Based on the classification proposed by contemporary scholars-legislators, the oath used in the practice of regional authorities refers to a religious form, which is also social in nature (Vasilev & Berezhkova, 2005). The conclusion is built on the oath-taking procedure and its peculiarities. Firstly, the one who took the oath called God to be the witness; secondly, people of non-Christian confession, passed the solemn oath ritual in accordance with professed religion rules. At the same time, we should agree with the statement that “in these situations, the practical interest in the performance of the service dominated over the theoretical construction ...” (Koroleva, 2019, p. 594). Meanwhile, the legal side of this process in relation to representatives of the Kalmyk people was executed at the legislative level in 1834 by “Regulations on the Kalmyk people management” (Imperial Majesty’s Chancellery, 1836). Paragraph 37 says: “The Chief Trustee, upon receipt of the Military Governor order for the approval of the elected officials, makes an order to take them to the oath in accordance with the rites of the Lamai faith.” However, the legislator does not cite the oath text and does not mention the procedure for conducting the ritual. The correspondence circumstances between the Chief Trustee of the Kalmyk people M.I. Tagaichinov and Dzhintsan Lama, arose in 1848, were also caused by the lack of the required oath text for use in legal proceedings (NA RK. F. I-7. Op. 2. D. 39). In this regard, the situation was different for people of the Mohammedan confession. On April 25, 1850, the provision of the Committee of Ministers

announced by the Governing Ministry of Justice “On a new oath form in court cases for Mohammedans” was highly approved (Imperial Majesty’s Chancellery, 1851). Despite the title of the regulatory legal act, it was noted in its introductory part that “... according to the conclusion of the Minister of Justice, [oath – I. L., D. K.] was sent out together with the rules at the Senate Gazette to officials and public places”, that is, the published text was recommended for the use of the oath of allegiance to the service. Structurally, in addition to the introductory part, the legislator provided for “Rules that have to be observed before people of the Mohammedan confession are sworn in”, and the oath form was in three languages: Tatar, Turkish and Persian. In the suggested statement, the oathed person states that “... in the case in which I have been called and will be asked, I have to show by the very truth ...”, that is, this text is applicable only in judicial practice. The rules, according to which the oath must be taken, are not as strict as those published in the Code of Military Regulations.

Analysis of office documentation and personal data of employees of the Office of the Kalmyk People and the Office of nomadic foreigners on the sworn lists, allows us to assert that there was no single text of the oath of allegiance to the service. The text structure was universal: firstly, the oath of allegiance was taken exclusively to one person – the Sovereign, in the presence of a clergyman, whose signature, along with the signature of the oathed person, took place on the sworn list. Secondly, the first lines of the oath contained an appeal to God: “God, unmistakably discerning truth and untruth, before your face I promise and swear ... to serve faithfully and unfeignedly and obey in everything without sparing my belly and to the last drop of blood ...”. Thirdly, the text contained the general provisions of the job descriptions, namely, to prevent damage, keep secrecy, follow instructions and regulations, etc. Fourthly, in the event of the oath promise violation, the person who oaths, sends himself terrible torment, which is said as follows: “... let the tongue be taken away, my body will be thrown into the underworld of the earth and thrown into the eternally flaming hell” (NA RK. F. I-21. Op. 1. D. 322. L. 6). In our opinion, the political system introduction of the religious-ethnic component into this element was a manifestation of the imperial regional policy in relation to the non-ethnic population. The purpose of this policy was to achieve a gradual transition of the outskirts to all-Russian standards in all spheres of society. The authorities, providing significant preferences for the population, without burdening themselves, secured assurances of allegiance to the service, which had a great importance, taking into consideration the border territories of nomads. The semantic load of the promise text of allegiance to the service was important for believers, which guaranteed its fulfilment by the person who oathed. Thus, a person pronouncing the words of an oath, in case of failure to fulfil it, sent curses on himself, which in itself posed a threat not only to him, but also to his relatives and friends, including descendants.

The sworn list was drawn up in two columns, in two languages and corresponded to the religious and ethnicity affiliation of the person who oathed. For example, to take the oath for the Kalmyk people, the text in Russian was placed **on the left** on the sworn list, and in Kalmyk language, in *todo bichik* – **on the left**. It should be noted that the vast majority of office documentation was drawn up according to the same principle in the first half of the 19th century. The documents had an internal purpose, as well as the verdicts of public gatherings. After taking the oath, citizens signed personal oath promises – “sworn lists”, one copy was sent to the Senate, the second remained in the personal file.

The swearing-in of all employees of both the central and ulus administrations was carried out strictly on the higher authorities' instructions. Office-work documentation of foreign departments allowed reconstructing the procedure for initiating the oath taking by foreign employees, as well as cases when it was necessary, namely, identifying their varieties.

- Oath of allegiance to the emperor on the occasion of the new emperor accession. For example, on October 20, 1894, the Minister of Internal Affairs “notifies the Astrakhan governor of the death of Emperor Alexander III and orders the immediate swearing-in of allegiance to the reigning Emperor Nikolai Alexandrovich and His rightful Heir Tsesarevich and Grand Duke Georgy Alexandrovich” (NA RK. F. I-22. Op. 1. D. 44. L. 9 app.). The Astrakhan Governor sent the requirements to the Chief Trustee of the Kalmyk people, and he, in turn, to the ulus Trustees. Printed sworn lists included the text of the notice “... for persons of Christian denominations and Kalmyks, herewith attached.” (NA RK. F. I-22. Op. 1. D. 44. L. 10).
- Oath of allegiance to the service of management officials. Thus, the Management of the Astrakhan military governor on the civil affairs sent an order dated May 11, 1836 to the Chief Trustee of the Kalmyk people A.M. Fadeev in connection with the reorganization of the management structure in the Kalmyk steppe, based on the Regulation of 1834. It contained information on holding elections to the Council of the Kalmyk Administration of members from the Kalmyk people (NA RK. F. I-7. Op. 4. D. 5. L. 1). On May 12, the Management sent a notice of the need to swear-in the position (NA RK. F. I-7. Op. 4. D. 5. L. 8). Based on the text of Fadeev's invitation, issued in two languages and addressed to the honorable owners, uluses' rulers and the Zaisangs, a solemn meeting of swearing-in took place on May 16 at the House of the Noble Assembly in Astrakhan (NA RK. F. I-7. Op. 4. D. 5. L. 10).

The head of the southern part of the Maloderbetovskiy ulus announces in his report dated May 2, 1902 No. 1481 to the Administration of the Kalmyk people, which, as a result of the instruction, presents “a sworn list on the taking the oath of allegiance to the interpreter service of the ulus entrusted to me...” (NA RK. F. I-9. Op. 1. D. 197. L. 8).

- Oath of allegiance to the service of clergy. The solemn swearing-in took place on July 16, 1870 at the Terekli-Mekteb headquarters on the election of karanogai Sametdin Efendi Maasut Efendiev to Akhun [the rank of Muslim scientist – I. L., D. K.] (SA IC. F. 249. Op. 2. D. 435. L. 19).

The famous Nogai scholar and publisher Abdurakhman Umerov was elected a mullah in one of the mosques by faithful Muslims in the city of Astrakhan. His candidacy was submitted for consideration to the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly only after passing for political reliability. In 1894, he took an oath and signed an oath, obligatory for all Muslims, to His Imperial Majesty (Kurmanseitova, 2009).

- Oath of allegiance to the service of elected officials of local self-government bodies. The procedure for elected officials of local self-government bodies ended with an oath promise in loyal service after the approval of the results by the highest official of the regional executive and administrative body, for example, the Chief Bailiff of the nomadic peoples of the Stavropol province or the Chief Trustee of the Kalmyk people of the Astrakhan province.

Thus, the ulus trustee was sent an order of the Administration of the Kalmyk people dated July 5, 1895 No. 83, in the operative part of which it was noted that "... according to the verdict of the Northern part of the Maloderbetovsky ulus, the following officials were approved ... Letting you know about this, the Administration of the Kalmyk People invites you, my dear Sovereign, to swear the above persons to an oath of allegiance to the service and submit the sworn list to the Administration" (NA RK. F. I-15. Op. 4. D. 1145. L. 22).

According to the report of the bailiff of the trukhmen and Kyrgyz peoples P.O. Rudanovskii dated April 21, 1870 in the name of the Chief Bailiff of the nomadic peoples of the Stavropol province Ia.A. Timofeev, in accordance with the order of the latter, the procedure for taking the oath was carried out in relation to Efendi Baubek Musayev, elected by the society of trukhmen of the Chavdurov tribe to the position of naib (SA IC. F. 249. Op. 2. D. 435. L. 9).

The four enumerated types of oaths of government officials among foreigners, identified during the analysis of documentary materials, show that the procedure for taking the oath was mandatory for all officials, regardless of the held position. The guarantee of loyalty, especially among elected officials of non-ethnic local self-government bodies, caused the concern of high-ranking officials, who warned in advance about the compulsory procedure and demanded the timely dispatch of sworn lists.

7. Conclusion

Therefore, the oath of the employees of foreign administrations from among the Kalmyks, Nogais and Turkmens, being an element of the state political system, was not fully regulated at the legislative level. At the same time, it occupied a special place in the concept of imperial policy on the regional outskirts, which was developed in the process of its implementation and largely depended on the prevailing circumstances. It should be noted that the swearing-in procedure was compulsory for employees of different levels of regional government, while a special ritual was developed for employees among foreigners. The oath content, filled with ethnic self-awareness and religious outlook, in accordance with the identity of the person who oathed, fully corresponded to the goals and objectives of the imperial government.

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