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**FOREIGN POLICY OF THE KALMYK KHANATE: CULTURAL,  
CIVILIZATIONAL AND SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL  
FOUNDATIONS**

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***Abstract***

The article is devoted to the study of cultural, civilizational and sociopsychological foundations of the foreign policy of the Kalmyk Khanate. In the XVII-XVIII centuries, it was one of the largest national political entities within the Russian state and was involved in international affairs. Cultural and civilizational constants determined the national form and directions of implementation of the foreign policy, international trade and confessional activities of the Khanate.

The geopolitical vision of the world, being a product of national history and culture, stimulated the active search for substantiations of the sovereignty of the Kalmyk state as an independent geopolitical subject during the formation of the Kalmyk Khanate.

Diplomacy of the Kalmyk Khanate was characterized by all features typical of the foreign policy of the nomadic state. Diplomatic affairs were a prerogative of the head of the state. Ethnic, cultural, historical, religious factors were decisive, influencing priorities and directions of the foreign policy of the Kalmyk Khanate. These factors were intensified or weakened depending on their correlation with economic policies of the khanate elite.

Buddhism which had a holistic concept of social and political development played a crucial role. It was important for uniting the ethnos, teaching internal dignity and readiness to fight in extreme situations.

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## **1. Introduction**

Foreign policy has always been derived from the nature of social forces, from the ideology shared by these forces and from specific purposes achieved through the relations of people and the state with the outside world (Kosolapov, 2001). The basis for these derivatives are traditions, culture, mentality, historical experience.

At the beginning of the XVII century, the Kalmyks who migrated from Western Mongolia and appeared near the Russian borders, formed their statehood in the form of a khanate becoming one of the largest national political entities within the Russian state in the XVII-XVIII centuries. Certainly, cultural and civilizational constants in the new geopolitical reality determined the form of international affairs of the Khanate.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Given the multinational and multi-confessional nature of the Russian state, it is important to study historical experiences of the foreign policy of the Kalmyk Khanate within the Russian state. This will make it possible to study the influence of sociohistorical and psychological aspects of the traditional mentality on the relationship between the region and center.

## **3. Research Questions**

At the first stage, relations of Russia and the Kalmyks were based on the vassal independence of their individual domains and were contractual by their nature. During their development, they became absolutely dependent when the Kalmyks were built into the nationwide socio-political system, and their rulers joined the Russian government chain: the tsar – the department – the military governor – the taishi.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is to study cultural, civilizational and sociopsychological foundations for international activities of the Kalmyk Khanate.

## **5. Research Methods**

For a more complete and comprehensive study, along with general historical and specialized methods, we used structural semiotic and structural functional approaches. This made it possible to consider the problem through the prism of cultural and ethnological approaches.

## **6. Findings**

The geopolitical vision of the world, being a product of national history and culture, stimulated the search for substantiations during the formation of the Kalmyk Khanate to justify the sovereignty of the Kalmyk statehood as an active geopolitical subject of international affairs. For several centuries, the ethnos shaped its view of statehood. In this respect, geopolitical Kalmyks' claims to the Siberian and Volga regions are evident. Thus, Kalmyk taishis referred to the fact that this land belonged to them since the ruling period of their "great-grandfather Genghis Khan" (Bogoyavlensky, 1939). During negotiations with Siberian

representatives of the Russian government, the rulers of the Torgut and Derbet principalities sought to inflate their negotiating status, referring to their origin from Genghis Khan, and demanded Russian amanats (Bogoyavlensky, 1939).

This argument was used in negotiations with the Ching government by one of the outstanding diplomats Savva Lukich Vladislavich-Raguzinsky, Count Illyrian. During the negotiations in Beijing, he rejected the status of a vassal imposed on Russia and claims on some Russian territories and managed to achieve recognition of the fundamental principle "everyone owns what he has" (Samoylov, 2000). Rejecting territorial claims, S. L. Vladislavich-Raguzinsky noted that Russian subjects had inheritance rights to own these land (Russian-Chinese relations, 1978).

Kalmyk historical and literary monuments are important for understanding geopolitical views of the Kalmyks (at least in the original version of unsystematic self-knowledge), in which people's memory, world perception, world view, world outlook and its deep mentality are concentrated (Kichikov, 1997). In his historical essay "The Legend of Oyrats", Gaban Sharab shows perniciousness of civil strife and calls to stop discord, strength the state and preserve its sovereignty. His work designated vectors of geopolitical expansion relevant for the Kalmyk Khanate foreign policy - Siberia, Khiva, Dzungaria, Persia, Tibet and China (Moonlight, 2003).

Buddhism which had a holistic concept of social and political development played a crucial role. It was important for uniting the ethnos, internal dignity and readiness to fight in extreme situations. Religious hierarchs supported the order existing in the Kalmyk Khanate and prevented its violation. Buddhism equipped both theoretical and practical activities of Oyrat diplomats.

The Gelugpa school which was dominant in the Tibetan statehood practiced protectionist policies regarding philosophical educational centers, since philosophical discourse was developed by traditional Gelugpa scholars. Representatives of the Gelugpa School, in contrast to other schools, put the value of philosophical knowledge to the fore, emphasizing omniscience of the founder of the Buddhist religion (Category Buddhist Culture, 2000).

The art of negotiation and the argumentation system were based on the theory of dispute management developed in Buddhism. Both the status of the envoy and his personal qualities were important. Kalmyk diplomats did not have operational relations with the ruler who had sent them, their missions lasted for a long time and, moreover, they practically did not enjoy the right of personal immunity. The exchange of embassies was the main form of diplomatic relations of the Kalmyk Khanate. Under these conditions, uncommon abilities were required for successful implementation of diplomatic tasks. Therefore, lamas headed the diplomatic service of the ruler, were his advisers and carried out the most important ambassadorial tasks. This fact was emphasized by D. Efremov in his report about Donduk Dashi Jamba-Jamso Don in January 1735 (National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia F. P-145. Op.1. D.470). The success of the expedition of Ivan Petlin to Beijing was due to experienced diplomats - Buddhist lamas Biliktu and Tarhan. They ensured relative safety of the Russians moving to the Chinese borders. The lamas were both guides and assistants in gathering information as well as companions who knew the Mongolian and Chinese embassy ceremonies. For Russian diplomats, the Mongolian language served as a means of communication both in Mongolia and in China (Myasnikov, 1987).

The Kalmyk khans had a large number of envoys - "elchis" - who were divided into ranks. Ambassadors were the most trusted persons of the khan. They were used for external relations at the "highest level". Envoys were sent mainly to trade missions, served as inspectors, and were used to communicate with local Russian authorities. Messengers forwarded letters and orders. Among them, there were people of different nationalities: Kalmyks, Tatars, Turkmen, Russians, Bukharians, etc. This reflected the rank of elchis rather than the multinational composition of the Kalmyk Khanate. Ambassadors were clergymen and zaisangs. Envoys were selected on the basis of tasks assigned to the mission and the specific route of the embassy. According to D. A. Suseeva, not all owners had the right to send to their envoys to other countries. Based on the letters of Khan Ayuki, in 1717 they were sent only by khan's wife Darma Bal, his sons, sons-in-law, nephews and grandsons (Suseeva, 2003).

The limited number of people is due to the fact that foreign trade was one of the elite's competition for high status which strengthened power of the leaders through dynastic marriages, vassal and allied relations (Kradin, 2004).

Diplomacy of the Kalmyk Khanate has all the features of the foreign policy of the nomadic state. Diplomatic affairs were a prerogative of the head of the state. The personal factor continued to dominate and the change of a sovereign often changed directions of the foreign policy. The state leader played a crucial role.

At the end of the 17th century - the first quarter of the XVIII century, Ayuka-khan turned the Kalmyk khanate into a state playing an important role in international affairs. He was ruling for more than half a century and extended his influence on all neighboring peoples, established relations with Turkey, the Crimea, peoples of Central Asia, and rulers of China and Tibet (Moonlight, 2003). As a result, the authority of the envoys of the Kalmyk Khanate was very high. In this respect, the famous conflict story of Dmitry Petrichis, the former interpreter of the embassy of A.P. Volynsky, sent to Persia in June 1719 with letters from Peter I and Chancellor G.I. Golovin to the Shah of Persia and the envoy Ayuki Khan, is illustrative. The courier of the Russian government seized the Kalmyk diplomat which caused a large-scale diplomatic scandal (Envoy of Peter I 1986).

The capture of the Khan's envoy by the Russian courier was negatively perceived by the Russian diplomat Florio Beneveli, the Bukhara ambassador, the French consul, official Shamkhal persons and merchants. Moreover, Florio Beneveli and the receiving party warned that this conflict could greatly offend Ayuka-khan and thus harm Russian-Kalmyk relations. Since this is a direct insult to Khan in the face of foreign rulers (Envoy of Peter I, 1986).

The fundamental principle of Kalmyk diplomacy was unity of political and economic activities. The foreign policy of the Kalmyk Khanate focused on commodity exchanges with sedentary neighbors. The Kalmyk rulers were engaged in the "ambassadorial trade", because more expensive gifts were given for any gifts (Bezprozvannyh, 2008). Those who were unable to give a gift became dependent on the bestower. The gift of an equal person assumed a reciprocal gift. The gift of a person of a higher status assumed a reciprocal service (Kradin, 2004). This was recorded in the order given to the Chinese embassy of Tulishiene sent to Ayuka-khan on May 15, 1712 (Russian-Chinese relations, 1978). G.S. Lytkin wrote that when the Kalmyks visited Bogdo-khan and offered him a scant tribute, they received more expensive gifts in return (Moonlight, 2003). Moreover, the "tribute" allowed them to visit the capital of China, trade there,

receive compulsory gifts from the Chinese emperor, live there for several months and receive generous gifts (Sources, 1992). The Qing government had to limit the number of Oyrat representatives arriving in China (Foreign Policy, 1977). Bestowers had the right to barter at the border points of the empire (Foreign Policy, 1988). Kalmyk owners used foreign embassies to conduct embassy trade. For example, in 1694, the ambassadors of the Turkish Sultan gave Ayuka “many gifts for which he repaid 500 horses” (National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia).

In 1717 a large diplomatic embassy consisting of 103 people was sent from Kalmykia to Persia. In 1719, the Persian Shah Sultan Hossein sent his envoy to the Kalmyk steppes. This was Ambassador Hayfbey who wrote a “book” about his stay at the Kalmyk Khan (Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire F. 119. Op. 119/1. 1744. D.35). The arrival of ambassadors was accompanied by the arrival of a trade caravan. Thus, the foreign trade of the Kalmyk Khanate which was of great importance for Kalmyks who chose profitable markets for selling their traditional goods experienced intensive development. In Persia, for example, people bought Kalmyk horses and camels. During one trip, the Kalmyks sold five thousand horses and six hundred camels. The governor of the Khanate Donduk Dashi, demanding from the Russian government to lift a ban on the export of horses, wrote that in Persia the Kalmyks received the price three times and four times higher (Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire F. 119. Op. 119/1. 1744 D.35). Moreover, Kalmyks bought camels in the Crimea and resold them in Orenburg where they were much more expensive. Envoys to Persia were also sent to buy pearls and precious stones. In addition to the Crimea, Kuban and Persia, the Kalmyks had trade relations with Bukhara and exchanged horses and camels for clothing and tents. Bukhara merchants often visited the Kalmyk khanates and acted as intermediaries in the foreign trade of the Kalmyk Khanate (Essays on History, 1967). The trade of nomads often relied on foreigners, since they did not have extensive and loyal personnel of the community dispersed throughout the world. The widespread use of Bukharians as merchants and diplomats was explained by the presence of numerous Bukharian diasporas in various countries and their experience in mediation, knowledge of foreign languages and religion. Islam in trade relations with Muslim countries turned into a special economic factor, since non-Muslim merchants in the Central Asian khanates paid a 5% tax while Muslim merchants paid only a 2,5% tax (Basyrov, 2002).

Negotiations were very crucial. The Oyrats gained dominance over the vast countries in Asia from Altai to the West to the Caspian Sea, to the South to the limits of India without bloodshed (Bichurin, 1991). A vivid example of negotiations as the most important means of implementing foreign policy goals and settling interstate affairs in the hardest political conditions is Ayuka-khan's negotiations with the first Chinese embassy in 1714. Preparation for the meeting of the Chinese embassy indicates that he already knew the positions of both Russia and China, taking into account the Jungar factor. Ayuka-khan chose an appropriate form of negotiation. Skillfully using contradictions among his more powerful partners, Ayuka Khan succeeded in negotiations. Despite complex relations in the Russia-China-Dzhungaria triangle, the Kalmyk Khanate remained an important element in the system of international relations in Central Asia and preserved freedom of bilateral relations.

Agreements were drawn up by treaties and oaths (Mitirov, 1989). Contracts were used for fixing concessions and privileges which made it possible to use written texts for future negotiations. Treaties were

often supported by dynastic marriages which were a sign of the high international prestige of the Kalmyk Khanate.

In the Kalmyk Khanate, there was a developed diplomatic etiquette characteristic of the traditional culture of the nomadic people. This ritual, being one of the forms of the Oyrat etiquette, performed a political function and was part of the foreign policy of the Khanate. Numerous direct contacts of the Kalmyk Khanate, significant embassy exchanges assumed that the Kalmyks had a developed diplomatic protocol which flowed from the traditional Oyrat system of communication standards. Kalmyks honored the rules of diplomatic ceremonies, sought to follow them, allowing deviations from the rules only in extreme situations on the basis of reciprocity or great profit.

The protocol practice of the Oyrats/Kalmyks provided for ritualized norms for receiving distinguished foreign guests. The “Narration of the foreign policy of Enkh Amgalan” describes a reception of the Manchu ambassadors by Galdan. The Oyrat-Khan received ambassadors in his residence. Then they handed him gifts. When asked about his health, Galdan replied that he felt well. In turn, he asked about the health of Bogdo-Khan. A great feast in honor of the ambassadors was arranged. Negotiations were held. The ambassadors were seen off in a solemn atmosphere (Chimitdorzhiev, 1970). These norms have been preserved for centuries, rooting in the deepest antiquity. For example, the heroic epic “Djangan” describes protocol norms of the ambassador’s meeting which included a number of stages: a) the meeting of the high embassy on the border of the Khanate; b) the arrival of the ambassador; c) the feast in honor of foreign guests; d) the negotiations; e) the farewell reception. This scheme was followed by Kalmyk khans and foreign diplomats who arrived in the khanate for many centuries. Accordingly, the Kalmyk diplomacy strictly adhered to the traditional ritual of the meeting of the ambassador. Considering the fact that the Chinese embassy was rarely sent to the Kalmyk steppe, representatives of Nazar-Mamut met him at the border of the Kalmyk khanate. The Khan sent horses as a gift and thanked the Bogda-khan for his care about his son Arabjur. On the way to the Ayuka-khan’s headquarters, the official delegation consisting of Kalmyk owners and lamas and Nogai elders with their subjects met the embassy.

The diplomatic service of the Kalmyk khans performed special foreign policy tasks.

The most important and sensitive issues messages were transmitted orally by couriers. For example, the envoy of Ayuka-Khan, passing the letter to the governor of Astrakhan A.P. Volynsky, informed that Ayuka-Khan sent his envoys to Bakhty Giray to extract information under the guise of friendliness (National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia).

Among the letters brought by the Kalmyk embassy headed by Namka-gehlen from Tibet and China described by the secretary of the Foreign Affairs Collegium V.M. Bakunin who fluently spoke Kalmyk and Mongolian, there were coded letters, sheets and notes (Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire). However, there were no translators, although this particular collegium was the center where Russian “codes” were created. Moreover, “from the rules for using ciphers, it is clear that cipher developers can decrypt them” (Soboleva, 2002). That is, Kalmyk ciphers had significant cryptographic security.

An effective means of foreign policy of the Kalmyk Khanate was foreign intelligence which obtained information about opportunities, intentions and activities of foreign states, their political development.

The Kalmyk Khanate needed maximum awareness of political, economic and military resources of neighboring and distant countries. Kalmyk owners regularly asked for information or asked to check data obtained from other sources. Thanks to their conversations with Chinese ambassadors, Ayuka-Khan received and rechecked information about the geopolitical position of China and showed them a high degree of awareness of the country's internal political and foreign policy development. In his conversations with ambassadors, he touched upon a number of sensitive issues (e.g., about disorder in China). Ayuka-khan's question about Korea - whether it brings tribute or does not (Russian-Chinese relations, 1978) - could have a hidden meaning. For example, the Korean government formally recognized its dependence on the Chinese court, which, however, had little influence on the practical policy of Korea. Moreover, the Korean intellectual elite did not fully recognized the moral authority of the Manchu dynasty (Korean History, 2003).

Intelligence information flowed into the Khan's headquarters from various sources: diplomats, spies, merchants, prisoners returning to their native khanate, etc. The most important data were obtained from information officers.

An indicator of the development of the diplomatic service of the Kalmyk Khanate is the fact that during this period foundations of business and diplomatic styles were laid. According to D.A. Suseeva, there were extralinguistic and intra-linguistic preconditions for them (Suseeva, 2003), including active foreign policy activities of the Kalmyks. Among the internal linguistic factors are accumulation of lexical, grammatical, derivational and syntactic means.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, Kalmyk diplomacy of the XVII-XVIII centuries has a lot of attributes typical of the foreign policy of the Asian and European states. The Kalmyk Khanate was not a stable national state. One should not speak about the systemic nature of international relations of the Khanate. Although the Kalmyk diplomacy combined diverse elements, they were accumulated and structurally fastened, if the head of the Khanate was a strong and gifted person. The diplomacy of the Kalmyk Khanate of the New Period overcame cultural, civilizational and confessional discrepancy with the outside world. Moreover, in international and vassal relations, the Kalmyk state was at a different level of stage development. The partners often did not understand each other which caused serious diplomatic and military conflicts. Ethnic, cultural, historical, religious factors were decisive. They formed priorities of the foreign policy of the Kalmyk Khanate. At the same time, the above factors were intensified or weakened depending on their correlation with economic policies of the khanate elite.

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