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CHRISTIANIZATION OF NON-RUSSIAN PEOPLES: MISSIONARY ACTIVITY OF ORTHODOX CHURCH IN KALMYK PLAIN

Mergen Goryaev (a)*, Aleksandr Lidzhiev (a), Vyacheslav Avliev (a)

*Corresponding author

(a) Kalmyk State University named after B. B. Gorodovikov, 11, st. Pushkina, Elista, 358015, Russia,
mergengoryaev@mail.ru, +79275924837

Abstract

The formation of a multi-ethnic state demanded from the Russian authorities a policy that would ensure the integration of the peoples within its constituency, the dominance of centripetal tendencies. And the Christianization of foreigners was considered as the important means of achieving the success of such policy. Activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, aimed at spreading Christianity among the peoples of the Volga region and the Urals, have not yet been fully investigated, and its study is an urgent task of historical science. Issues related to the history of the Christianization of the Kalmyks, the state's policy were still being dealt with in the 18th century - 19th century by Russian scientists and church leaders, representatives of the local administration. The Orthodox Church was an important component of the political system of pre-revolutionary Russia. Orthodoxy was an ideology that held together subjects of a single empire, and one of the basic tasks of colonization was the realization of the idea of Orthodoxy. This idea was carried and embodied by the Russian state itself, which acquired new lands, expanded the boundaries of the Orthodox world and increased the number of Orthodox peoples. Therefore, from the very beginning, emphasis was placed on the Christianization of small nations that were part of the Russian Empire, and it was for the realization of such a large-scale goal in 1740 that a specially approved state-church body was created - the New Baptismal Office, with the center in the city Sviyazhsk: Sviyazhsk Blessed Virgin monastery.

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1. Introduction

In the second quarter of the 18th century, the process of the Christianization of the Kalmyks, which was previously very spontaneous, becomes purposeful. That is, missionary activity is supposed not only among ordinary Kalmyks settled throughout the Volga-Don basin, Siberia and the Urals. It affects the Kalmyk Khanate itself - the patrimony of the supreme power of the Khan and the Buddhist church.

2. Problem Statement

The scope and methods of the missionary activity of the Orthodox Church among Kalmyks were carried out taking into account not only external and internal factors, but also changes in the status of the Kalmyk people within Russia. Depending on these variables, in certain historical periods the missionary activity of the ROC was suspended or encouraged by the state, its forms and methods changed. Over the past decades, many Kalmyk scholars have published many papers on the Christianization of Kalmyks and the missionary activities of the Russian Orthodox Church. However, these are articles, paragraphs or chapters in separate scientific monographs. That is, they are fragmentary, and today there is a need for a deeper and more extensive study of the Christianization of the Kalmyk people and the missionary activity of the Orthodox Church. The basis of this article lay the work of scientists - historians Vitevsky (1890), Batmaev (2002), Gury (1915).

3. Research Questions

The scope and methods of the missionary activity of the Orthodox Church among Kalmyks were carried out taking into account not only external and internal factors, but also changes in the status of the Kalmyk people within Russia. Depending on these variables, in certain historical periods the missionary activity of the ROC was suspended or encouraged by the state, its forms and methods changed. Today there is a need for a deeper and broader study of the Christianization of the Kalmyk people and the missionary activities of the Orthodox Church.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this work is to study the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church and its results among the Kalmyks as a component of the domestic and foreign policy of the Russian Empire, i.e. considering them in the general context of the country's political history in the XVIII - late XIX centuries. and the attitude of the central authorities to the nomadic aristocracy. Missionary activity was one of the effective ways to weaken the power of the ruler of the Kalmyk Khanate and the Buddhist church.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study consists of descriptive-historical, comparative-historical, systematic methods of analyzing phenomena and events, based on the principles of historicism, complexity and objectivity. This allows you to see the process of Christianization in its real development, in relationships and interaction with other historical events and phenomena (Lvovskiy, 1898). The use of these

principles and methods makes it possible to objectively evaluate events and facts taking into account the specifics of a specific period both in the history of Russia as a whole and of Kalmykia itself.

6. Findings

In the matter of mass Christianization of the population of the Kalmyk plain, the government attached primary importance to converting representatives of the Kalmyk nomadic aristocracy to Orthodoxy and one of the first representatives of the Kalmyk elite to be baptized was Ayuki Khan's grandson, Baksadai Dorji, in baptism Peter Taishin. It was a political calculation due to the fact that after the death of Ayuki in 1724 in the Kalmyk Khanate the struggle between his heirs intensified, and one of the contenders for the Khan's throne was Baksadai Dorji. In response to a positive decision on the question of whether he and his associates accepted Orthodoxy, he asked for help to take the throne. In addition, his petition contained a desire to have a fortress at Krasny Yar on the Buzan River, in the vicinity of which he and his subjects would wander, provide regular Russian troops and military artillery for defense against enemies (Palmov, 1926).

However, if the decision of the first two requests was made difficult by the political conjuncture, in more serious cases the Astrakhan authorities were ordered to call in troops from Astrakhan, Tsaritsyn and other cities. In particular, repeated clashes between unbaptized and baptized Kalmyks forced the Russian government to allocate 900 people from suburban and Cossack regiments attached to the Kalmyk Affairs department.

The government took the issue of the baptism of Baksadai Dorji very seriously, paying him serious attention. In this connection, since May 1724, the Astrakhan Chancellery and the Collegium of Foreign Affairs have conducted intensive correspondence. So, in the dispatch from the Astrakhan authorities in the CFA dated May 12, 1724, it was said about the need "... to set aside courtyards with stone chambers in China (China Town) or in the vicinity of the Kremlin ...". Baksadai Dorji himself also quite often wrote to the CFA office, as evidenced by the originals of his letters, which are kept in the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire. Unfortunately, the archives did not preserve the response messages of Baksadai Dorji. The letters that have come down to us are interesting with detailed information about the real intention of Baksadai Dorji to accept Orthodoxy, and also provide an opportunity to look "from the inside" at the real events that took place in those years in Kalmyk society. All letters are authentic, have a Khan seal, the language is laconic and precise.

It should be noted that the path Baksadai Dorzhi from the Kalmyk plain to Moscow and St. Petersburg was quite detailed in the dispatches of the CFA, the circle of persons was drawn up and on whose shoulders a mission was assigned to accompany the noble person. The necessary sums of money needed by both Baksadai Dorji and members of his retinue were allocated.

Upon arrival in St. Petersburg, Baksadai Dorji, in a solemn atmosphere, was baptized on November 15, 1724, in the Holy Trinity Cathedral. The presence of Peter the Great, the bishops of Novgorod, Pskov, Vyatka, members of the Holy Synod, senators, ministers, generals and other notable persons emphasized the importance of this action. During his baptism, a golden cross was laid on Baksadai Dorji, he was dressed in a new dress, a sable fur coat covered with gold brocade, and a sable cap. 469 rubles were spent on the

rite of baptism. Peter I was his successor, therefore the newly baptized was named Peter, and the title - Taisha - became his last name.

So, a Buddhist, a representative of the Khan's family Baksadai Dorji, became Orthodox Christian Peter Petrovich Taishin. And from this moment on, he began to sign his letters accordingly - Prince Peter Tayshin (Daychin - in Kalmyk language). A week later, on November 22 of the same year, in the conciliar church of the Trinity-Sergius Monastery were baptized and the persons accompanying Baksadai Dorji - seven people of Kalmyk nobility and eight Buddhist monks. Their receivers were senators, presidents of colleges, and other notable people. All of them received new names, gifts for 779 rubles 35 kopecks, and 20 rubles each and together with Peter Taishin returned to Astrakhan (AFPR. L. 74ob., 91ob.). After he went to his nomadic camp, located between the Volga and the Don.

Peter Taishin's wife Tseren Yanji was baptized only more than ten years later, already during the reign of Empress Anna Ioannovna. For this, on September 26, 1734, she was sent to St. Petersburg. The route followed from Tsaritsyn through Tambov and on to Moscow, for which she was assigned 26 carts and 12 soldiers from the Vyatka Dragoon Regiment. Arriving in St. Petersburg on October 11, 1734, on November 17, she was introduced to Empress Anna Ioannovna. July 3, 1735, Tseren Yanji adopted Orthodoxy, and the Empress herself was her successor. Therefore, in her baptism, they called her Anna. Together with Anna Tayshin, her zaisangs were also baptized. Archpriest V. Terletsky was baptized in the church of Isaac Dalmatsky, noble zaisangs were baptized in the church of the Preobrazhensky regiment (Vitevsky, 1890).

In January 1725, Empress Catherine I pointed out the need to build a marching church for P. Taishin, which was done on February 8, the church was consecrated in the name of the Resurrection of Christ and on February 24 sent to the Khanate owner.

Hieromonk Nikodim (Lenkeevich), who founded and headed the first Orthodox mission among the Kalmyks, was the first missionary in the Kalmyk plain to serve the marching church. He was supposed to act on the basis of the instructions of the Holy Synod "On the Enlightenment of the Newly Baptized Kalmyks by the Teaching of the Christian Faith," to which he directly obeyed. The mission did not have a special assignment to travel to the khanates of other owners and spread Orthodox Christianity, although it did allow for "those who want to baptize Christianity according to the order of the church." As follows from the text of the instruction, the main task of the mission was to discourage newly baptized Kalmyks from their usual practice of shamanism ("sorcery and witchcraft"), as well as to neutralize the influence of Buddhist lamas. It was recommended that they are included in the prayer life of Orthodoxy gradually, gently: "Do not impose daily long prayers", do not require strict observance of fasting, only to explain that "eating and drinking is a great sin."

Both the church and the authorities realized the importance of knowing the Kalmyk language, necessary both for communication and for disseminating the foundations of Orthodoxy. Therefore, together with hieromonk Nicodemus, five students of the Moscow Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy were sent to the Kalmyk plain to teach the Kalmyk language. Already on May 29, 1729, Nicodemus informed the Holy Synod that schoolchildren had learned to read, write and speak Kalmyk.

On May 1, 1725, hieromonk Nikodim (Lenkeevich) set off to the nomad camp of P. Taishin. At the same time, he not only performed the immediate task - he enlightened the Orthodox faith who had already

accepted Christianity, but also spread Christianity to those who still held their traditional beliefs. So, for 1727-1728 176 adult men with their wives and children were baptized, in 1729-220 people. In particular, the Kalmyk priest Dorji, who took the name David, came to Orthodoxy. From him, Nikodim received Buddhist manuscripts in the Kalmyk language. Knowledge of the Buddhist worldview and its religious practices were necessary for pastoral work. In turn, the Synod asked Father Nikodim to engage in translation work, that is, the translation of Christian literature into Kalmyk. Thus, the Lord`s Prayer, the Symbol of Faith, the Ten Commandments with Commentary was translated.

Beginning on May 3, 1729, Nikodim repeatedly applied to the Synodal office for sending to the mission an alphabet, icons, baptismal shirts, and crosses. He asked to send another priest to teach the children and prepare unbaptized Kalmyks to accept the faith. Moreover, the work of the mission did not run smoothly, since the newly baptized hesitated between Orthodoxy and Buddhism, the Kalmyks, who retained the faith of their ancestors, felt hostile relations and threats. In particular, brother Taishin, Dosang repeatedly threatened to beat the priesthood and his disciples for baptizing and continuing to baptize Kalmyk (Nefedev, 1834).

In turn, P. Taishin also expressed his dissatisfaction with the mission and Nikodim. So, he complained that “there were no spiritual teachers with him, but who was a hieromonk, he was not often with him and lived more in Astrakhan, and the church was pious and had never been to him in the khanate. And now the hieromonk is sent to Moscow”.

In the early 1930s, Nikodim received the rank of archimandrite and became abbot of the Ivanovo monastery in Astrakhan. By this time, the need for activating missionary work among Kalmyks became apparent, deepening the degree of penetration of Orthodox Christian doctrine into their consciousness of training priests and translators from Kalmyks themselves, having previously taught them Russian literacy. So, already in 1732, by the decision of the Holy Synod, with the active assistance of the Astrakhan Bishop Illarion and the Governor I.P. Izmailov, at the Ivanovo monastery, a school was opened for teaching Kalmyk baptized children to read and write Russian. True, the further fate of this school is unknown.

On June 17, 1734, Archimandrite Nikodim was released from missionary service and transferred to the disposal of the Archbishop of Kiev and Galicia Raphael (Zaborovsky). Of course, the mission led by him during the years 1725-1734 marked the beginning of the spiritual enlightenment of the Kalmyks, while experiencing considerable difficulties and opposition from both the simple Kalmyks and the Buddhist clergy. This is stated in the instructions of Nicodemus drawn up by his pupil:

1) “You should stay permanently with Peter Daichin and with newly baptized Kalmyks with a schoolboy assigned to you to the team, and make sure that the newly baptized do not forget the learned prayers. If one of the newly baptized leaves the Orthodox faith, report on such to the Astrakhan provincial office and demand a decision.

2) In addition, the Kalmyks will come and want to be baptized and their present to Astrakhan province, Governor Ivan Alekseevich von Mengden.

3) All newborns should be baptized, which of the newly baptized will want to marry, it is necessary to demand a resolution on the marriage.

4) See that there are no submissions from the owners so that the newly baptized Kalmyks are inclined towards them”.

On the basis of this document, it can be concluded that the central and ecclesiastical authorities already followed the rather strict rule of those who accepted Orthodoxy, in extreme cases, they applied to the provincial office and even followed the punishments for avoiding reading obligatory prayers. Especially closely followed the Buddhist lamas, not allowing them to even approach the baptized Kalmyks. In cases of death, Kalmyks were taught to bury according to Christian canons.

Although the baptism of a representative of the Khan's family, each of the parties pursued its own benefits, however, both sides miscalculated: P. Tayshin did not become Khan, and missionary activity did not bring major results. Nevertheless, for the Orthodox Church and the government, the fact of the baptism of representatives of the khan family was of extraordinarily great importance. It was during this period, from 1725 to 1735, at the height of the internecine struggle between members of the khan's family, about 1,500 families converted to Orthodoxy. If, on average, one Kalmyk family is counted as four people, then there should have been more than 6,000 people baptized (Buhler, 1846; Zlatkin, 1983; Batmaev, 2002; Burchinova, 1980).

Taking these figures as reliable, we can talk about a certain success of the first Orthodox mission among the Kalmyks, while not forgetting that the level of assimilation of Orthodoxy was not deep. Successes in the Christianization of the Kalmyks were especially evident in the places where the baptized Kalmyks settled.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the Christianization of the Kalmyks, unlike other peoples of the Volga region, was carried out exclusively on a voluntary basis, which, to a significant extent, was due to military-strategic considerations. Christianization was accompanied by various methods, the organization of the missionary activity of the church itself changed at various stages of the integration of Kalmyks into the socio-political structure of Russia, and also depending on internal and external political circumstances. The Russian government attached great importance to the baptism of the Kalmyk elite, which was supposed to influence its fellow tribesmen and become the backbone of the authorities in pursuing the policy of Christianization. As for the Kalmyk nobility itself, it resorted to a change of faith as an “argument” in the struggle for power.

At the same time, the Russian government did not set a goal to convert all Kalmyks to Orthodoxy, especially since there were also objective difficulties - long distances, a nomadic image of new subjects, the impossibility of combining school education with a nomadic way of life.

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