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Report of the Interpreter N. A. Lebedev to Senator F. I. Engel on Settled Lifestyle of the Kalmyk  
Zaisang Tukchi (1827)

Abstract

The article provides a source analysis of the report of the interpreter of the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, collegiate assessor Nikolai Alekseevich Lebedev, concerning settled lifestyle of the Kalmyk Zaisang Tukchi. This document, dated December 30, 1827, is addressed to the Privy Councilor, Senator Fyodor Ivanovich Engel; it is kept in the fond I-1 "Chief Bailiff of the Kalmyk people under the Astrakhan Governor" in the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia. The fact of the Bagatsokhurovsky ulus Kalmyk Zaisang's transition to sedentism, described by N. A. Lebedev, was confirmed by local authorities in person of the Chief Bailiff of the Kalmyk people E. E. Bets-Kharchenko; it was promising in the light of integration of the Kalmyk steppe into the all-imperial socio-economic and political-legal space. Having voluntarily accepted citizenship of the Russian state in the 17th century, by mid-19th century the Kalmyks preserved their traditional social structure; their interactions were regulated by imperial legislation based on the norms of customary law. The authors underscore that preservation of the nomadic lifestyle and main trends of Kalmyk economy (extensive cattle breeding, dictated not only by their mentality, but also by nature and climate) hindered transition to sedentism and delayed the region's integration. The use of general scientific research methods, as well as special ones permits to consider this document as a source on the history of the nomadic peoples' transition to sedentary lifestyle. The use of historical-chronological method permits to consider the deliberation springing from N. A. Lebedev's report, which coincided with Senator F. I. Engel giving his account on the results of his trip to the Astrakhan gubernia with a view to reorganize the Kalmyk steppe management. Reconstructive analysis shows that cardinal changes in traditional society are possible only with approval and participation of representatives of the privileged class, in this case, the Noyons and Zaisangs. It is concluded that positive experience of the Zaisang of the Bagatsokhurovsky ulus and judge of the ulus Zargo Tukchi not only became an example for the population, but was also noticed by metropolitan officials and encouraged by Emperor Nicholas I. The latter fact is regarded as imperial tactic used in the inorodtsy environment in order to prompt the nomads to settled lifestyle.

## Keywords

Source studies, historical sources, Kalmyk steppe, Astrakhan gubernia, Caucasian region, Kalmyks, nomadic economy, sedentim, sedentarization, National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia.

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