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Effects of Natural and Climatic Factors on the Economic Life of the Kalmyks in the 1920s–30s

Abstract

The article studies the complex activities of daily living of the Kalmyk nomads in the days of collectivization and during transition to sedentary life; identifies and analyzes their traditions, historical experience and methods of maintaining ecological balance. The territory of Kalmykia is the driest area in the south of Russia. The biggest problem for Kalmyk nomads mostly

engaged in cattle breeding was constant shortage of water and lack of good pastures. In modern conditions, the situation is exacerbated by fast desertification of lands, increasing soil degradation, unresolved problems of water supply to population and livestock, which hinders the development of agriculture in the region and normal life of its inhabitants. Consequently, the interest has been increasing in traditional ways of survival of the Kalmyk population in their extreme natural and climatic conditions, which determines the relevance of this article. Nomadic type of economic management contributed to the adaptation of the population to difficult natural and climatic conditions of the territory, formation of a careful attitude to the environment. The article is to consider the influence of natural and climatic factors on economic activities and daily life of the Kalmyk nomads in the 1920s–30s. The assigned research task is resolved by applying methods of systematic and comparative analysis. The main sources are archival documents identified in the fonds of the State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereinafter, GARF), the Russian State Archive of Economics (hereinafter, RGAE), the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia (hereinafter, NARK). The content analysis of text arrays of archival materials has identified specific natural and climatic factors of the Kalmyk territory, which influenced their economic and daily life. The nomadic Kalmyk people showed an amazing ability for self-realization during transition to a sedentary lifestyle and collectivization in the 1920s and 1930s. In the difficult socio-economic realities of the first decades of the Soviet power, such factors as ability to adapt traditional methods and centuries-old experience of traditional pastoralism, as well as methods and techniques of survival in difficult natural and climatic conditions, to new trends and circumstances helped the ethnic group to manifest itself.

Keywords

Daily life of the Kalmyk nomads in the 1920–30, nomadic peoples, south of Russia, transformation of nomadic societies, nature management, natural and climatic factor, Kalmyks, Soviet national policy, sedentary lifestyle.

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