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Bicheev, B. A.

Kalmuk State University after B. B. Gorodovikov, Elista, Russian Federation

Diary of the Kalmyk Lama Dorji Setenov's Trip to Mongolia

Abstract

Socio-economic reforms of the turn of the 20th century had their effect on the ethnic outskirts of the Russian state. In the Kalmyk nomadic societies of the Astrakhan and Stavropol gubernias and in Kalmyk stanitsas of the Province of the Don Cossack Host, there began a revival movement among Buddhist priests, reconnection to the Buddhist world. The article is to study

the renewal process in the Kalmyk monk community drawing on travel notes of the said monks made on pilgrimage to Tibet and Mongolia. Discourse problematics come from the need to analyze the revival movement and the process of renewal of the ties to the Buddhist world. Travel notes of Kalmyk pilgrims are regarded as one of the aspects of the issue. Despite great interest of researchers to the history of Kalmyk Buddhism, the renewal movement remains outside the scientific field. Meanwhile, the revival movement and the process of renewing ties to the Buddhist world are extraordinarily important not only for study of the Kalmyk Buddhism history, but also for inclusion of imperial outskirts in all-Russian socio-economic reforms. The article draws on a manuscript titled "Journey through Mongolia of the head of all khuruls of the Bolshederbetovsky ulus bagshi Dorji Setenov," which is kept in the fonds of the Russian Geographical Society. The diary written in Russian is an example of Kalmyk pilgrim travel notes of the turn of the 20th century. While the travel notes of D. Setenov and manuscripts of other Kalmyk pilgrims are known to researchers, this text has never been published. The artistic content of the notes has been assessed by literary scholars, but they remained unnoticed as a source on renewal movement in the Kalmyk Buddhism. Source analysis of the travel notes demonstrates authenticity their data on social status, religious life, and monastery education in Mongolia. Comprehensive analysis of the text and use of biographical methods permit to research it in relation to life and actions of its author. D. Setenov's manuscript is a valuable personal provenance source reflecting the nature of renewing ties to the Buddhist world and uniqueness of the renewal movement among Kalmyk priesthood. The manuscript remains relevant and important to researchers studying the history of Buddhism in Russia and Mongolia.

### Keywords

Historical source, Buddhism in Kalmykia, renewal movement, pilgrimage, travel notes, D. Setenov, Mongolia.

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## About the authors

Bicheev Baazr Aleksandrovic, PhD in Philosophy, B. B. Gorodovikov Kalmyk State University, department of philosophy and cultural studies, professor, Elista, Russian Federation, +7-961-394-55-64, baazr@mail.ru

ORCID 0000-0002-9352-7367

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