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The epistolary legacy of the historian of the Buryat people G. N. Rumyantsev, based on materials from the archival collection of the Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist, and Tibetan Studies of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1939–1966

Abstract

The study introduces and comprehensively analyzes a corpus of epistolary sources from the personal archival collection of Soviet orientalist, Mongolian scholar, and Tibetologist Georgy Nikitich Rumyantsev (1903–1966), housed in the Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist, and Tibetan Studies of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMBTS SB RAS). The scholar's personal collection (F. 17) is one of the largest, comprising more than 682 storage units. In addition to biographical materials and documents revealing his scientific and public activities, the collection contains unique letters from Boris Vladimirovich Semichov (1900–1981) and Fyodor Aleksandrovich Kudryavtsev (1899–1976), leading orientalist historians of their time, whose scholarly achievements have received wide recognition in the academic community. This collection of epistolary materials, represented by correspondence with colleagues, possesses high source value. The data contained within allows us to reconstruct key aspects of G. N. Rumyantsev's biography, his scholarly work, and the intellectual context of the era. One of the greatest scholars, G. N. Rumyantsev was an outstanding scholar and a profound Orientalist. Through his long and fruitful work in the history, ethnography, and philology of Mongolian peoples, he made a significant contribution to Mongolian studies and earned recognition from the scholarly community. His integrity and scholarly conscientiousness earned him the deep respect and gratitude of his peers. Letters to G. N. Rumyantsev from two prominent Soviet historians and Orientalists constitute valuable historical and biographical sources, reflecting significant events in the scholarly life of Buryatia and revealing new aspects of professional relationships within the scholarly community, thus enabling us to reconstruct informal scholarly communication networks. The study is based on a comprehensive source analysis using a historical and biographical approach, allowing us to establish the relationship between personal professional contacts and the development of scientific ideas. The archival materials introduced into scholarly circulation not only significantly expand upon G. N. Rumyantsev's biography but also open up new perspectives for studying the history of the scientific community. Analysis of these materials not only deepens our understanding of known historical processes but also reveals previously overlooked factors and patterns leading to a rethinking of established scientific paradigms.

Keywords

Soviet-era Tibetology in Buryatia, G. N. Rumyantsev, B. V. Semichov, Buddhist heritage, F. A. Kudryavtsev, Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist, and Tibetan Studies of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, correspondence.

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