



Changes in the Social Structure of the Kalmyk Society in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses changes in the social structure of the Kalmyk society in the late 19th - early 20th century under the influence of the reform of 1892 that abolished personal dependence of commoners from the nobility. The authors examined the reasons of adoption and the main directions of the reform of 1892 in Kalmykia, identified priority directions of social changes and established the sources of new types of Kalmykia rural population. The work is based on the extensive literary and archival material, primarily statistical. To achieve maximum objectivity, the authors frequently used averaged numerical indicators as annual statistical data greatly differed due to an imperfect data collection system and instability of the nomadic. In a number of cases to show the role of the patriarchal-tribal relations, the authors used observations of contemporaries. The article deals with the accession sources of Kalmyk new property nobility. Special attention is paid to the fact that its predominant stratum was the representatives of the commoners' stratum. The specificity of the Kalmyk society social stratification in different Uluses was determined based on the statistics. The article demonstrates the scale of hired labor use in Kalmykia. The available data fully confirm significant use of hired labor in the Kalmyk livestock farms and partly in agricultural farms of Kalmykia. Thus, the new phenomena in the Kalmykia economy had an impact on the evolution of social relations in this region.

Keywords: Kalmyks, Social Structure, Nobility, Commoners, Hired Labor, Market, Seasonal Work

JEL Classifications: J110, J580, Z130

1. INTRODUCTION

The social structure of the Kalmyk society had formed in the early period: The feudal nobility was represented by Noyons and Zaisangs, and the stratum which was close to peasant serfs was represented by commoners who were in the "mandatory" (dependent on feudal lords) relations, which have been legalized by the Great Legal Code of 1640, adopted by the meeting of the Mongol-Oirat feudal lords. These dependence relations evolved under the influence of socio-economic processes throughout the 17-19th centuries. However, the biggest changes in the social structure of the Kalmyk society occurred in the late 19th, early 20th century, which were caused by the reform of 1892.

In this article, the authors attempt to analyze social changes in the Kalmyk society in the late 19th, early 20th century. Given that this problem has many aspects, the team of authors restricted themselves to the following issues: Characterize the reasons of adoption and the main directions of the reform of 1892 in Kalmykia, identify priority directions of social changes and establish the accession sources of new types of Kalmyk rural population. Wealthy cattle breeders who often combined their livestock production with the agricultural and commercial activities referred to the new social strata of the Kalmyk population that emerged during the study period. At the opposite side, there was an indigent part of the population, forced to become hired labor.

2. METHODOLOGY

The social development problem of Kalmyks has been studied for many years and has often been controversial. The earliest researchers of this problem, Zhitetsky and Dubrova evaluated the very essence of “mandatory” relationship of Kalmyks in a diametrically opposite manner. Zhitetsky came to the conclusion that the “mandatory” relationships of Kalmyks were only personally dependent and in this sense he often used the definition of “slave relationship” (Zhitetsky, 1892). On the contrary, Dubrova believed that patriarchal tribal relations characterized the Kalmyk society. In this regard, he believed that the “privileged Kalmyk strata with the rights of masters over slaves is a product of our own artificial. creation” (Dubrova, 1988, 102).

In the Soviet period with the approval of the Marxist methodology, an idea of social relations in the Kalmyk society as the feudal ones was established. This view had become firmly established both in the course of the study on the social evolution and characterization of social conflicts and movements. Minkin directly stated: “To prove that patriarchal tribal relations dominated in Kalmykia means to deny the existence of classes and class struggle in Kalmykia until the revolution” (Minkin, 1968, 7). These views prevailed in the Soviet historiography of the problem.

At the end of the 20th century, the works in which the relationship between the Kalmyk commoners and the nobility were represented as ideal started to be published. Based on this, some authors have come to the mistaken belief that the reform of 1892 had violated the established patriarchal and tribal idyll and social peace in the Kalmyk society (Mitirev, 1998). In the modern period, the authors of history works on this period drew attention to the economic, cultural and political processes taking place in Kalmykia and referred to the history of social relations to a lesser extent. The exceptions were two monographs: One on about the socio-economic development of Kalmykia in the study period (Komandzhaev 1999), the other - on the reform of 1892 (Komandzhaev and Matsakova, 2011). The monograph of Badmahalgaev (2003) is also worth mentioning; in this work, the author traced the evolution of the Kalmyk economy. There are no special works on the social history of the Kalmyks in the English-language historical literature. However, the works in English dedicated to various problems of Eurasian nomads’ history and of important theoretical and methodological value have been published (Vasjutin, 2003; Martin 2010; Zhang et al., 2007; Humphrey 1978; Kradin 2008).

In the analysis of this issue, the authors used a wide range of sources (statistical and clerical materials, observations of contemporaries).

3. RESULTS

The position of the Kalmyk nobility (Noyons and Zaisangs) had begun to change since the first half of the 19th century. With the establishment of the right to primogeniture for inheritance of land, a new stratum of Noyons without Uluses and Zaisangs without

Aimaks (Ulus is a large feudal property of a Noyon, consisting of Aimaks owned by Zaisangs) emerged. By the Regulations of 1847 on the Kalmyk people management, the adoption of which completed the establishment of the “trusteeship” system, Zaisangs had been relegated to the position of Aimaks managers. All the legalization of their status and the appointment to the post of an Aimak Zaisang were in the hands of the administration. Thus, most of feudal lords had already lost their former economic potential and the socio-political influence by the time of the reform of 1892.

Some changes occurred in the environment of common people or Albatu, that is those who paid an annual tax (Alban). Their stratification had already occurred in the second half of the 19th century. In particular, according to the annual reports of the administration office of the Kalmyk people of the Astrakhan province, impoverished people amounted to about 25% of the total number of commoners and were forced to engage in seasonal work in fisheries and agricultural work in the last 5 years before the reform (1887-1891).

Cancellation of personal dependence of Kalmyks was designed immediately after the abolition of serfdom in Russia according to the reform of 1861. However, the creation of various commissions and the discussion of the problem took 30 years, and only in 1892 a law was finally passed, according to which Kalmyk commoners were granted the right of “free rural inhabitants” and abolished the rights of owners to dependent commoners. Considering the peculiarity of the administrative system and land relations of Kalmyk nomads, this matter was not considered in the law with a reference to the future land and administrative reorganization of Kalmykia. Despite the fact that the adoption and implementation of this reform could not immediately eliminate feudal and even patriarchal and tribal vestiges of Kalmyks, nevertheless, it gave many strata of the Kalmyk society freer socio-economic, public and political development.

The reform of 1892 has resolved the following tasks: Abolish personal dependence of commoners from the Kalmyk nobility, organize Hoton, Aimak and Ulus gatherings as organs of self-government, designate the functions of elected Hoton elders and Aimak elders, pay cash compensation to Noyon and Zaisangs for the loss of subservient commoners and introduce an annual tax per family (nomad tent duty) in the amount of 6 roubles. Undoubtedly, this tax was racking for the poor, as there were other various postal, social and other obligations. In various Uluses, according to the report data of the administration office of the Kalmyk people of the Astrakhan province, the actual tax from a family amounted to 10-11 roubles. The Congress of Ulus trustees in 1904 as a result of calculations performed by Ulus officials stated that on average taxes and duties per a Kalmyk family amounted to more than 12 roubles.

In general, the adoption and implementation of the reform of 1892 played a positive role: Abolition of “obligatory relations” that entered the general direction of social and economic development of the region as an important component, had caused qualitative changes in social relations among the Kalmyks.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. The Social Evolution of the Kalmyk Feudal Nobility (Noyons and Zaisangs)

Before analyzing the social changes, let us present the value of average population by strata of the Kalmyk steppe of the Astrakhan province in the study period (average annual indicator is calculated by the author by the annual reports of the Administration office of the Kalmyk people in the Astrakhan province) (Table 1):

Certainly, under the influence of the course of events in the late 19th - early 20th century, the class system of Kalmyks actively began to break down and give way to a process of social stratification in the society. There were only few descendants of feudal lords among them. In archival and published materials, we encounter names of only three representatives of the big feudal nobility (Noyons) that formed their bourgeoisie stratum and adapted their farms to the market requirements and produced cattle for sale. These are the Noyons of the Maloderbet Ulus - Tundutov, the Bolypederbet Ulus -Gahaev, Hosheutovsky - Tyumen and Tyumen. In particular, in 1899 Tundutov sold 40 horses at a high price (on average - 110 roubles) and got a profit of 4.4 thousand roubles, Noyon Tyumen - 138 roubles, 24 head of cattle, 2148 sheep, totaling 20.2 thousand roubles. In 1901 Noyon Gahaev sold 13 horses, 18 head of cattle, 759 sheep totaling 7.3 thousand roubles, (Russian state historical archive, fund of 1291, inventory 85, case 383, sheet 77), in the same period he had around 700 head of cattle and more than 4 thousand of fine-wool sheep. Noyon B. Tyumen had more than 160 horses.

We need to point out that all these 3 Noyons had land lots in private use. According to the archival data, Tundutov owned a land lot 2533 tithes big (1 tithe equals to 1.09 hectares) in the "Solyanka" tract. We must say that the researcher Palmov specifies that the area of 2533 tithes was located in the tracts of "Arzhanets" and "Lapshino" that was given to him in 1862 for the exclusive use in the northern part of the Maloderbet Ulus, the other - in the tract "Solyanka" 90 tithes big. Besides, Tundutov owned the lot in the "Burata" tract in the southern part of the Maloderbet Ulus 500 tithes big and the plot in the "Tsatsa" tract 2555 tithes big. Noyon Tyumen owned lands with the size of around 20 thousand tithes (Palmov 1926, 20). Gahaev owned the lot of 3000 tithes in the Bolshederbet Ulus of the Stavropol province. Agriculture also developed successfully in these farms. For example, in 1901 Gahaev sold bread for the amount of 6.8 thousand roubles.

A rather numerous part of the feudal lords - zaisangs were presented in the new emerging elite. Such group includes such cattle dealers as Dondukov, Zaisang of the southern Maloderbet

Ulus, who in 1899 had 1292 horses, Orgechkiev Zaisang of the Yandyko-Mochazhny Ulus had 730 horses of different breeds and sold them at an average price over 70 roubles, Zaisang Onkorov of the Bagatsohurov Ulus had around 2.5 thousand horses, he sold from 50 to 150 head annually at an average price of 80 roubles. Already in the beginning of the study period, commoners sold 6 times more cattle than Kalmyk feudal lords, but in 1914 - 18 times more (Russian state historical archive, fund 1291, inventory 84, case 129, sheet 19). For the examined period, the cattle turnover of the Noyon and Zaisang stratum increased by 25-26%, but turnover of commoner after the First World War exceeded previous figures by 2.7 times. Based on the data below that demonstrate the merchantability of cattle by strata, we can confirm that Zaisang farms had a bigger share in the overall economy of Kalmyks. Even though they amounted to only 2.1% of all farms of the Kalmyk steppe, their share in the turnover is already higher, as can be seen from the report data (average annual indicator) for 1903-1914 on the proceeds from cattle sales by strata.

4.2. Changes in the Environment of Commoners

However, the predominant formation source of a new entrepreneurial layer was a stratum of dependent population - commoners. This is confirmed by the data in the Table 2. In general, despite the fact that many farms of commoners were far from the market in the full sense of the word, we can say that the share of cattle farmers' turnover, who came from this environment, is significantly higher than the share of the Noyon-Zaisang stratum representatives.

Certainly, under the influence of the course of events in the late 19th - early 20th century, the stratum system of Kalmyks actively began to break down and give way to a process of social stratification in the society. Some feudal lords managed to adjust to new market conditions. Speaking of formation of the national agricultural bourgeoisie in Kalmykia as a result of the stratification of ordinary nomads, it cannot be unconditionally equated to wealthy Russian peasants (the so-called kulaks). In general, a Russian wealthy peasant is economically and socially more developed than a rich cattle farmer in Kalmykia. In our opinion, this is due to a number of reasons.

The main reason is that the rural bourgeoisie in Russia as a whole was formed during the nationwide market establishment, in Kalmykia - during the initial period of the region's involvement in the market where natural farming had not lost their grounds yet. Besides, agriculture implies higher forms of economy that livestock production. This is reflected in renting and buying land that got traction at that time, amount of crops, the broader involvement of hired labor, a greater use of modern tools and agricultural machinery, higher commercialization of farms. It

Table 1: Population size in the Kalmyk Steppe of the Astrakhan province in the late XIX - early XX centuries

Strata	Number (thousand people)	% of the total number
Noyons	0.03	0.03
Zaisangs	2.9	2.13
Clergy	1.5	1.07
Commoners	138.11	96.77
Total	142.54	100

Table 2: Cattle turnover in the Kalmyk Steppe of the Astrakhan province in the early XX century Strata

Strata	Cattle sold for the amount of in thousand roubles	Cattle sold in %
Noyons	21.5	1.0
Zaisangs	132.4	6.0
Clergy	36.1	1.6
Commoners	2029.3	91.4
Total	2219.3	100

is necessary to consider that despite the intensive transition to a settled way of life, livestock production in Kalmykia was still of semi-nomadic nature, and that in cattle breeding Uluses, patriarchal and tribal traditions were much more tenacious. Besides, there were no cities, industrial centres in Kalmykia (the only industrial enterprises were fisheries in the Caspian part), and naturally communication between nomadic settlements (hotons) in the Kalmyk steppe and nearby towns was weak. Buyer-ups played the main role in cattle farmers' trade communication with the market. The differences were also reflected in the degree of political consciousness. A rich cattle farmer in Kalmykia often strongly supported even "tribal" traditions.

Farms of certain descendants of commoners were closely linked with the market losing many natural features, so that part of population turned into major cattle dealers. With all that, the total number of livestock in Kalmykia in the late 19th-early 20th century grew; the concentration of a Kalmyk herd also intensifies due to the spread of commodity-money relations. Already in 1909, 16.3% of all households in the Kalmyk steppe of the Astrakhan province owned 79.4% of cattle and, certainly, the degree of economic wealth started to prevail over class privileges (Ochirov 1925, 62).

4.3. Formation of the Stratum of Hired Workers in Kalmykia

Another important element of social changes in the Kalmyk society was emergence of the stratum of hired workers as a result of social stratification. Penetration of market relations into Kalmykia led to land and cattle being accumulated by the rich, and, consequently, to further impoverishment of common people and their transition into the category of the agricultural proletariat. In a relatively short period of time - the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries - the majority of them was smashed up or severely impoverished. According to the research materials, in 1909, poor farms that had no cattle and had up to 20 head accounted for 81.8% of the total number of Kalmyk farms, of which completely property less farms amounted to 13.3% (Materials 1910, 16-17). The following materials taken from the annual report of the Administration office of the Kalmyk people of the Astrakhan province suggest the permanent nature of social stratification of the Kalmyk society: In 1900-1914 the number of households without cattle ranged within 15-22% of the total number of farms.

The data found by us for some years in the reports of the Administration office of the Kalmyk people, are incomplete, but they clearly indicate the instability of small livestock farming under the conditions of extensive grazing. If we take the data for individual Uluses, the following picture emerges. The largest share of households with no cattle was observed at the beginning of the 20th century in the Bagatsohurovsky (from 30.6% in 1902 to 41.5% in 1915), Harahusovsky (in 1915 - 28.5%) and Erketenevsky (26.3% in 1913) Uluses, that is in the eastern Kalmykia. However, it would be wrong to consider these figures as a sign of a fully commercial differentiation of the peasantry. In many respects, these figures show us the impoverishment of the laboring masses in the interior of the nomadic and semi-nomadic societies. It is in these three Uluses where there was the highest percentage of households with no cattle and domination of extensive methods

of animal husbandry: Lack of feed and hence the nomadic nature, etc. Naturally, the next dry spring and summer or a snowy winter turned small and medium cattle farmers into beggars. On average, the annual livestock die-off in the Kalmyk Uluses of the Astrakhan province amounted to about 6%, in case of extreme weather conditions, this figure in some regions of Kalmykia increased significantly (up to 20%). For example, according to the trustee certificate, at the end of the 19th century 46.5% of households of the Bagatsohurovsky Ulus roamed outside their Ulus, half of which would "undoubtedly beg for help." In the Ulus itself, aside from cattle-less households, 28.4% of the farms "can barely feed themselves" (National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia, fund 9, inventory 1, case 144, sheet 92).

In those Uluses, where the transition to a settled way of life developed greatly, livestock farms, if possible, intensified, took the path of merchantability; the share of cattle-less households basically indicates the stratification of peasantry already, although it is significant, but lower than in the above three Uluses. For example, in the Ikitsohurovskom Ulus cattle-less households amounted to 9.8% of the total number in 1904, in the northern part of the Maloderbetovskiy Ulus - 15.8%, in the southern part (Manychsky) - from 7.1% in 1902 to 20.5 in 1913, in the Alexandrovskiy Ulus - 14.3% in 1913. The Yandyki-Mochazhny Ulus is of special note, the number of cattle-less households has been steadily high - 17.5-18% in 1903-1915 (National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia, fund 9, inventory 1, cases 201, 227), and where fishing was the main industry. Cattle breeding for the majority of population was of an auxiliary character, large commercial livestock farms were almost not developed here, and such indicator as livestock can be used to characterize the peasantry stratification of this Ulus with some reservations. Keep in mind that impoverished population was arriving in this Ulus from all over the Kalmykia in the hope of finding work in the fisheries of the Caspian and the Lower Volga region. In general, as shown by the above figures, compiled on the basis of reporting data and the censuses on the number of cattle, peasantry stratification in Kalmykia was going quite intensively.

Seasonal work of poor people at fisheries and salinas in Kalmykia developed together with the stratification of commoners. According to the study of the Kalmyk steppe of the Astrakhan province in 1909 on the fisheries of the Caspian are, there were more than 5 thousand workers (Proceedings 1910, 925).

Also in the late XIX - early XX centuries, the use of hired labor in animal husbandry increased. Since the maintenance of large livestock farms require significant amounts of labor, impoverished commoners were forced to work for wages in such farms. In 1909, there were more than 10 thousand workers (Proceedings 1910, 925), or about 20% of the labor force of the Kalmyk Uluses of the Astrakhan province.

The available data fully confirm the broad use of hired labor in the Kalmyk livestock farms and partly in agricultural farms of Kalmykia. Nearly all farms with more than a hundred head of cattle had operated with hired workers. There were 6 workers per each farm with more than 100 head of cattle, and 37 - with

more than 500 head of cattle. At the same time, a pattern should be noted that annular workers prevailed in wealthier farms, but middle- and low-income farms mainly used the labor of day laborers and seasonal workers.

When characterizing the changes in the social structure of the Kalmyk society we should not overestimate the course and importance of this process, as among commoners commodity differentiation did not occur under the market conditions, but a simple property differentiation inherent in a natural farm. Extensive forms of management were still of great importance in the economy. They were still far from the market and weakly involved into the system of commodity-money relations of a household. It is no coincidence that administration officials acknowledged that the Kalmyks sometimes pay to local merchants with cattle, wool and skins of animals. In addition, the use of hired labor was characterized by a combination of old (bonded winter hiring, work for debts, for milk yield, etc.) and new methods.

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, the new phenomena in the Kalmykia economy had an impact on the evolution of social relations in this region. During the period under review, peasantry stratification increased, which greatly contributed to the abolition of “obligatory relations.” Apart from the representatives of the feudal stratum who joined commercial farming under the new conditions, formation of the new national rich nobility occurred, mainly due to people coming from the commoners’ background. At the other side, there were quite a large number of the poor and the poorer households, which were suppliers of hired labor. The scope of the article does not permit the authors to characterize the social changes in the Kalmyk society more fully. In particular, the content of patriarchal tribal and feudal relations among the Kalmyks needs to be studied, as well as the forms of new relations in market conditions. Speaking of social changes in Kalmykia, one cannot also ignore changes in the environment of the resettling Russian-Ukrainian peasantry, which differed with looser social relations. Availability of both large agricultural and livestock farmers and masses of poor households promoted the development of relations based on free recruitment of workforce. Research interest is also characteristic of the interpenetration process of hired workers from the Kalmyk environment into the resettlement environment and *vice versa*.

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