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**THE ACCELERATED “SETTLEMENT
OF THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION” BY THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY
AND SOVIET STATE APPARATUS IN KALMYKIA (1917 – 1924)**

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**Ускоренное «решение религиозного вопроса»
партийно-государственным аппаратом в Калмыкии
(1917 – 1924 годы)***

Throughout the centuries-old history of the Russian Empire, the state has closely interacted with all religions found on its territory. The Kalmyk people practiced Buddhism – the world’s oldest religion – and Buddhism exerted a tremendous influence on the formation of the Kalmyk ethnos, state, and spiritual environment. By 1917, Buddhist clergy in Kalmykia totaled more than five thousand with ninety-two khuruls (churches) of varying size.¹

A number of serious scholarly works based on archival materials previously unavailable to researchers have appeared in Kalmyk historiography. These works approach the Buddhist clergy from new methodological positions: examining the repressive policy of the Soviet state against Buddhist clerics; analyzing the restrictions of religious freedom during the formation of the administrative-command system; and assessing the unprecedented actions of the Soviet state during the 1920s – including the famine of 1921–1924 – in seizing church valuables in the Kalmyk Autonomous Region.²

The change in the Russian political system in 1917, and the Bolsheviks’ seizure of power radically altered church-state relations. If previously Russian authorities sought to weaken the influence of the church through restrictive measures, the new Soviet government, on the basis of decrees signed by V.I. Lenin, transformed religious policy by adopting a hard line aimed at destroying the church, confronting organized religions, and completely eradicating religious beliefs from the life of the Soviet people.

In this article we attempt to analyze the most significant antireligious actions taken by the Bolshevik party and Soviet government against the Buddhist clergy and believers in Kalmykia. These actions led to significant human losses and aggravated social tensions within Kalmyk society.

During the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the upper clergy in Kalmykia greatly increased their activity in accord with the interests of the

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Bolshevik party. Buddhist leaders actively participated in all socio-political events that took place in Kalmykia. Before the proclamation of Soviet power on the Kalmyk steppe, the Lama of the Kalmyk people, Chimid Baldanov, served in the state bureaucracy; until March 1918, he worked in the Kalmyk section of the Astrakhan provincial executive committee of the Soviets. In the post-October period, part of the Buddhist clergy acted as ideological opponents of Soviet power, and sought the support of the white movement (bogsha-lama of the Don Kalmyks, M. Bormanzhinov, baksha-lama of the Manych ulus, B. Karmakov, Ch. Baldanov). However, most of the Buddhist clergy adopted a neutral attitude until the end of the Civil War.

The leadership of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy, in order to establish an official position in relation to the new government, held active consultations with Buddhists from other regions of Russia. Believers expressed concern over Soviet policy towards their faith, especially after the Bolsheviks adopted the decree of 1918 on church and state separation. The Buddhists, like adherents of other faiths, hoped that this separation would, first and foremost, protect their Church from state interference in its affairs.

However, as became readily apparent, the Soviet state constantly intervened in church life. The Bolsheviks' creation of a commission that imposed its "invaluable instructions" on the bishops initiated this interference. Persecution, which began in 1917, did not cease, and over time increased in scale and form.

The first stage (1917–1920) of repression against the Buddhist and Orthodox churches in Kalmykia includes the events surrounding the revolution and seizure of power in the country, and is notable for the looting by white and red military units of church and khurul wealth. It is indisputable that the revolutionary events of 1917 led to the collapse of the moral foundations of society, which hindered the Buddhist clergy from fulfilling its basic function of spiritual service to the Kalmyk people. However, the on-going civil war on Kalmyk territory prevented the still-feeble Soviet state from fully implementing its repressive anti-religious policy.

In the second stage (1921–1923), state policy, based on the general message coming from the Soviet leadership, turned to repressive measures against clergymen and believers of all faiths. In connection with the mass famine in the Volga region – Kalmykia included – confiscation of church valuables and property proceeded as a means of providing aid to the starving population. The authorities also attempted to destroy the clergy from within by fostering division among religious figures.

The third stage – the period of agricultural collectivization (1929–1931) – is notable for massive repressions in the region directed at kulaks and the clergy that was initiated by the Central Executive Committee Resolution of April 8, 1929, "On Religious Associations."

The fourth stage – the years of the “Great Terror” (1937–1938) – was marked by the repression and liquidation of Buddhist religious figures, as well as the mass arrest and execution of leading party, state, and economic officials.

Let us consider and characterize in greater detail the first two stages of state-church relations in Kalmykia.

The first stage, in our view, is characterized by revolutionary chaos, permissiveness, immorality, the destruction of religious cults, and the death or exodus from Buddhist affairs of many clerics. At this time, the first decrees of the Soviet state appeared, undermining the economic and social foundations of the church. The first Soviet decree, “The Decree on Land” (October 1917), deprived the church of all “monastic and church lands with all their living and dead implements, buildings, and supplies.” The decree of January 23, 1918, “On the Separation of Church from State and School from Church,” deprived the church and religious communities of their property and legal standing.³ Shortly thereafter, another document entitled, “Instruction on the Procedure for the Implementation of the Decree,” appeared, which regulated church life in detail. Following these decrees, the Buddhist church, itself a large landowner, saw its economic activity severely limited and its economic base undermined.

In July 1918, the First Congress of Soviet Deputies of the Laboring Kalmyk People deliberately failed to provide for the material maintenance of the lama and other clerics in its financial decision.⁴ That September, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Kalmyk Laboring People, A.Ch. Chapchayev, in his report to the First Astrakhan meeting of the heads of the departments of internal management, expressed support for the decision of the Soviet authorities to separate church from state.⁵ However, until the autumn of 1918, Kalmyk authorities, due to subjective and objective factors that developed on the Kalmyk steppe, could not actively intervene in the affairs of the Buddhist church or in the sphere of its economic interests.

Economic and administrative pressure on religious organizations in the country increased from the end of 1918. The Liquidation Commission (Department) of the RSFSR People’s Commissariat of Justice (NKIust) was established to abolish the administrative and management structures of the church. In November 1918, the Liquidation Commission requested specific information from republican and regional executive committees, including Kalmykia, regarding the conduct of the nationalization of church property.

The Second Extraordinary Congress of Soviets of Kalmykia adopted the decision to seize kubitkas, not only from prosperous segments of the population, but also from the khuruls, as billets for Kalmyk Red Army draftees. The First Congress of the Representatives of Land Departments and Aimak Councils of Kalmykia declared all Buddhist church property, its living and dead inventory (cattle, buildings and valuables), property of a non-laboring economy, and therefore national property subject to registration by Soviet authorities.

The Third Congress of Soviet Deputies of the Kalmyk Laboring People, in December 1918, proposed devoting special attention to the gelungs (high priests) when collecting the extraordinary revolutionary tax. In the words of the congress resolution: "Register all the wealthy, the speculators...and gelungs, and employ the most repressive measures when collecting the tax."⁶ Clearly, the resolution equated the Buddhist clergy with all the speculators and fallen elements of the time.

The documents adopted at the regional level set the flywheel of the Soviet state's repressive machine into full motion against the Buddhist and Orthodox clergy in Kalmykia.

From 1919, the authorities energetically began to nationalize and expropriate church property by administrative and military means. The local authorities of the Sereb-Djapov aimak (village), Khosheutovsky ulus (district), decided "to categorize Khurul cattle as aimak public property," and obliged the aimak council to register it and strictly implement their decision.⁷ Similar decisions were taken in many aimaks and, in general, all nationalized khurul cattle was placed under the authority of aimak executive committees for pasturing and safeguarding.

The struggle against the religious views of the population in Kalmykia did not start immediately. During the Civil War, the Bolshevik position in the region remained weak, preventing the Party from fully implementing its ideas or influencing popular opinion. In turn, Buddhist clergymen during this period did not seek to affect the political mood of the Kalmyk population, concentrating instead on retaining their property and resolving economic problems. Many Buddhist monks abandoned their khuruls when military operations threatened, fearing looting by both sides in the conflict. In the khurul of Tsanid-Choira (the higher philosophical-Buddhist school) the clergy even ceased instructing their students for a time. In some khuruls, clergymen refrained, as far as possible, from communicating with the laity. Given this behavior, the authorities could not accuse the clergy of anti-Soviet propaganda not matter how strongly they suspected it of continuing religious activity.

The deputies to the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (March 1919) realized that their religious policy had resulted in violent excess, and now resolved to turn to extensive anti-religious propaganda. Local governing bodies had launched a large-scale operation to destroy church shrines, such as the relics of the holy righteous of the Orthodox Church. The religious valuables of the Kalmyk people were also subjected to the same fate. As an eyewitness testified, the Platov Khurul of the Don Kalmyks "was abandoned by all. The doors and windows, both in the gelung's houses and in the main temple, were opened, part of the furniture had been tossed out... I saw a large bronze gilded statue of the Buddha. The Reds made it a shooting target. The chest of the Buddha was riddled with bullets... In another place the huge library of Novo-

Alekseev Khurul... was turned into bedding for the trench... from the silk images of the Buddha, the wives of the Red Army soldiers made themselves skirts.”⁸

Most of the population in Kalmykia and in the Russian regions continued to feel the need for religious faith. Moreover, during this period the Buddhist clergy's influence on believers remained significant. Given this, the Soviet state decided to abandon force in favor of a long-term program to destabilize the church from the outside. By aggravating existing disagreements among church leaders – orthodox against conservative and modernist against renovationist groups – party leaders hoped to affect a split. Officials also endeavored to draw the mass of believers into the conflict as part of a gradual effort to breakdown the entire confessional field.

The Renovationist movement within the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy, initiated and actively supported by the leadership of Kalmykia, dates back to 1920. The movement was headed by the Dalai Lama's representative and hambo-lama, Agvan Dordzhiev; Gavva Seperov, the shajin-lama of the Kalmyk people since 1920; Sharab Tepkin, deputy to the Tibetan representative in the RSFSR since 1922. The irreconcilable struggle between conservatives and renovationists ultimately led to the overall weakening of Buddhism in Kalmykia. In any event, given the Bolsheviks' wholesale rejection of religion, it is now clear that neither groups' efforts could have brought about the flourishing of Buddhism. Such hostile conditions as obtained precluded the possibility of attaining a “religious paradise” in a single territory.

The second stage, was characterized by the policy of “War Communism,” general devastation, and famine. During this period, the vehement antireligionists, Lenin and L.D. Trotsky, hungered after a complete and final victory over religion, and the famine that broke out in 1921, covering almost forty percent of the country's territory, served them well. The Russian peasantry confronted moral breakdown, physical extinction, social degradation, and complete economic collapse. According to *Izvestia*, “In Stavropol gubernia, in the spring of 1921, more than 400,000 people were starving. In the uezd, eighty-five percent of the population is starving. People are devouring everything: old sheepskin coats, scraps of leather, etc. Dogs and cats are delicacies.”⁹ In those days, A.M. Amur-Sanan, a member of the Kalmyk Executive Committee, emotionally noted that “the Kalmyk people are experiencing the black days of extinction... The Kalmyks are dying silently and submissively. Such a strange, people, full of fanaticism, prefer to die on their steppe than trouble others.”¹⁰

On December 27, 1921, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee adopted the decree, “On Valuables in Churches and Monasteries,” and on February 22, 1922 issued a decree on the seizure of church and monastic valuables unnecessary for divine services “that can be used to fight hunger in the Volga region and sow the fields.”¹¹ In March 19, 1922, Lenin wrote a secret letter to V.M. Molotov [Copying and disseminating the letter was forbidden. –

E.B.] in which the leader of the international proletariat orders: “Carry out the confiscation of church valuables with the most furious and ruthless energy, not halting before the suppression of any resistance... the greater the number of reactionary clergy and reactionary bourgeoisie we manage to shoot in this regard, the better.”¹²

To implement the Leninist directives and instructions of the published resolutions of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, secret commissions for the seizure of church valuables began to be created everywhere, in addition to official commissions subordinate to the commissions to help famine victims. In actuality, a secret commission oversaw the seizure of valuables.

In the Kalmyk Autonomous Region, Ulumdzhi Lavgaev (or Zodbayev in other documents) was appointed to head the official commission for the seizure of church valuables of the Kalmyk Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). A “troika” consisting of Kozlov, the head of the Kalmyk Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), A.G. Maslov, commander of special forces (hereinafter CHON), and Kanter, a department head of the Astrakhan GPU made up the leadership of the commission. The secret commission instructed all ulus (district) executive committees to remove gold, silver, and precious stones from the churches within a month.¹³

Local authorities issued resolutions on immediate confiscation and widespread approval in the context of famine conditions. From the start, the authorities wanted to uncover the attitude of the Buddhist clergy to the seizures given the clergy’s authority among believers. Therefore, the regional authorities responsible for the seizures were forced to appeal to the Buddhist clergy leadership. In order to gain their support, Central Executive Committee member, Chavichalov, and the representative of the Manych Ulus Executive Committee, Lidzhiev, visited Gavva Seperov, the lama of the Kalmyk people, in Chor-Khurul. As the local administration reported to the Center: “in the uluses (districts) the mood of the Buddhist clergy was assessed as benevolent, there were no openly antagonistic actions, the seizure took place calmly and under normal conditions.”¹⁴ Protests, like those in the central regions of Russia, did not occur in Kalmykia. If they did, they were immediately and decisively suppressed by the NKVD.

In the post-revolutionary period, Kalmyk khuruls were not notable for richness of decoration or an abundance of precious articles, stark evidence of the civil war when Red and White troops had looted them. Thus, for example, the representative of the official commission for the confiscation of church valuables, U. Lavgaev, reported that “in the Maloderbetovskiy ulus, the churches and khuruls were so poor that except for the Kiselev Church there is nothing to confiscate.”¹⁵ An inspection of Orthodox churches in the Remontnenskiy district,

and the Buddhist khuruls of Manych and Ikitsokhurovsky uluses yielded disappointing results for the leaders of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region. A special meeting of the Presidium of the Kalmyk Regional Executive Committee noted: “in the Kalmyk region there are neither monasteries nor rich churches because gold and silver articles are not used, and all the adornments consist of images of the Buddha painted on canvas, rarely on silk...”¹⁶

At the same time, some confiscated religious objects had a historical and museum value; they added a solemnity and grandeur to religious services that had not only aesthetic, but also ideological significance. By no means did all confiscated valuables help feed famine victims as intended. Part of the national wealth was stolen, plundered by a small band of functionaries. The NKVD informed regional leaders of instances of mass embezzlement of property and valuables confiscated from khuruls in the uluses and at the local level. As a “contributing factor” in the looting of the seized assets, these reports point to “the complete absence of any inventory of the valuables. At the local level there were no certificates or lists of valuable gold and silver items. Mass abuse, a gross violation of revolutionary legality.”¹⁷

In the end, church valuables in the region were confiscated: “silver items, 28 *funt* 37½ *zlotniky*; a number of defective small and large silver coins, 2 *funt* 75 *zlotniky*; defective pocket change, 106 coins weighing 54½ *zlotniky*; various silver coins amounting to 157 rubles 75 kopecks.”¹⁸

The 1922 campaign to seize church valuables in Kalmykia accorded with the Soviet state’s anti-religious policy. It was, in fact, a cruel state act intended to undermine the economic independence of the entire clergy and, ultimately, liquidate the church, and eliminate religion from public consciousness. The punitive methods used in the campaign transformed it into a battle, the first crushing victory over religion.

During the Soviet era, the clergy was simultaneously subjected to all kinds of discriminatory persecution. In particular, the Buddhist lamas were deprived of their voting rights. According to the estimates of Professor K. Maximov, in the elections to the Soviets in 1924 about 1,700 people were deprived of the right to vote in Kalmykia; of these more than fifty percent were clergy. In 1925, in accordance with the instruction of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, “On the Procedure for Depriving Citizens of Electoral Rights,” of August 11, 1924, 1,189 people or 63.8 % of clerics were not allowed to vote in the election campaign of 1925. In 1926, 850 people, or 72.4 % of the Buddhist clergy, were not allowed to vote.¹⁹

In subsequent years, limits on the clergy’s political rights increased. The next instructions, in 1926, expanded the number of those deprived of the vote. Khurul auxiliary staff had already been deprived of electoral rights whether or not they received remuneration for the performance of their duties.²⁰ It became impossible for the clergy to attain “legal” citizenship and thereby avoid the

shameful stigma of “nonvoter” during the years of Soviet power. The revoking of electoral rights deprived this group of social support and obstructed the activities of the church.

One feature of state religious policy in relation to the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy in the 1920s is that the Bolsheviks sought to establish visibly friendly relations with them in order to advance “world revolution” in the East. The Buddhists of Kalmykia had direct connections with Tibet, and Soviet authorities tried to use this for their own purposes. In turn, taking advantage of this state strategy, on July 19, 1923 the Buddhist clergy of Kalmykia held a congress with the direct support of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and the People’s Commissariat for Nationalities. The hambo-lama, A. Dordzhiev, who enjoyed special immunity due to untouchability, prepared and organized the congress. All Soviet institutions and officials were obliged to provide him with every possible form of assistance during his official trips through the RSFSR.²¹ The Presidium of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region made the decision to hold the Buddhist congress in Tsanid-Choir Khurul, Manych ulus.

The congress adopted two fundamental documents: “The Regulations of the Inner Life of Monastics in the Buddhist khuruls of the Kalmyk Autonomous Region” and the “Directive on the Management of Spiritual Affairs of Kalmyk Believers: the Buddhists of the Kalmyk Region.” The congress also gave its approval to the Lama of the Kalmyk people, the Central Spiritual Council (including representatives of the clergy and laity), and the Auditing Commission.²² The congress formalized the juridical norms of the Buddhist confessions in the Kalmyk Autonomous Region. The social status of Buddhism had grown substantially and received temporary state support.

Soviet authorities, however, did not consider the Buddhism an “ally.” Already, in January 1924, the Kalmyk Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) decisively decided “to crush the priest” and then “to deal with God.” Local leaders and rank-and-file Communists were obligated to “systematically expose the tricks of the priests (gelungs) and to prove their uselessness.” In this way, the authority of the Buddhist confession was undermined, following which the authorities categorically raised the “question of closing the Khuruls” and “to begin the assault on God (*nachat’ shturmovat’ Boga*),”²³ thereby pursuing a policy of open struggle against religion with the goal of its complete elimination.

Thus, at Moscow’s direction, Kalmyk authorities pursued a resolute and uncompromising struggle against religion. By local decision, the khuruls’ economic base was destroyed, and some khuruls forcibly closed. Dozens of higher lamas were subjected to repression and, under the pressure of the authorities, many priests abandoned the priesthood. Buddhism continued to be practiced, although not as openly as before. Religious consciousness was not eradicated despite the new authorities’ threats of reprisal and persecution. This

indicates that the accelerated implementation of the Bolshevik party's struggle against religion in the mid-1920s did not result in the policy's full implementation, particularly in the Kalmyk Autonomous Region.

In the years that followed, the Soviet state undertook a more severe anti-religious campaign in order to destroy religion in general. By the end of the 1920s, not a single khurul operated in Kalmykia. The anti-religious campaign succeeded in obliterating the main thing – the system for reproducing Buddhist knowledge and its best adherents. Despite the prohibitions and persecutions, the arbitrariness and the lawlessness, however, the Kalmyk people in the Soviet era managed to preserve Buddhist traditions and values. A spiritual inheritance that helped them survive the most severe conditions of moral and physical suffering during the period of illegal deportation, and served as the basis for Buddhism's revival in Kalmykia in the 1990s.

Notes

¹ *Синицын Ф.Л.* «Красная буря»: Советское государство и буддизм в 1917 – 1946 гг. СПб., 2013. С. 31.

² *Бакаева Э.П.* Центральное духовное управление буддистов: Представления и реальность // Вестник Калмыцкого института гуманитарных исследований РАН. 2012. № 4. С. 34–44; *Дорджиева Г.Ш.* Репрессированное буддийское духовенство Калмыкии. Элиста, 2014; *Максимов К.Н.* Трагедия народа: Репрессии в Калмыкии: 1918 – 1940-е гг. М., 2004; *Бадмаева Е.Н.* Религиозная политика Советского государства в период нэпа: На примере Калмыцкой автономной области // Научные ведомости Белгородского государственного университета. Серия: История. Политология. Экономика. Информатика. 2009. Вып. 9. № 1 (56). С. 107–113.

³ Собрание узаконений и распоряжений рабоче-крестьянского правительства РСФСР (СУ РСФСР). 1918. № 18. С. 263.

⁴ Установление и упрочение Советской власти в Калмыкии (январь 1918– апрель 1919 гг.): Сборник документов. Элиста, 1973. С. 65, 66.

⁵ *Ibidem.* С. 95.

⁶ *Ibidem.* С. 167.

⁷ *Маслов А.Г.* Страницы былого: Из воспоминаний участника борьбы за установление Советской власти в Калмыкии. Элиста, 1962. С. 59, 60.

⁸ *Басхаев А.Н.* Буддийская церковь Калмыкии: 1900 – 1943 гг. Элиста, 2007. С. 81; *Джевзинов П.* Донские калмыки-казаки в борьбе с большевизмом в 1917 – 1920 гг. New Jersey (New York), 1968. С. 17. [Typescript].

⁹ Известия. 1921. 20 апр.

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- ¹⁰ *Амур-Санан А. М.* Вымирающая степь // Жизнь национальностей. 1922. 22 марта. № 4 (10). С. 10.
- ¹¹ State Archive of Russian Federation (GA RF). F. P-1065. Op. 4. D. 31. L. 139.
- ¹² Архивы Кремля: Политбюро и церковь, 1922 – 1925 гг. Кн. 1. М.; Новосибирск, 1997. С. 140, 144.
- ¹³ National Archive of Republic of Kalmykia (NA RK). F. P-3. Op. 2. D. 280. L. 15.
- ¹⁴ NA RK. F. P-3. Op. 10с. D. 19. L. 72.
- ¹⁵ NA RK. F. P-3. Op. 2. D. 280. L. 18.
- ¹⁶ NA RK. F. P-3. Op. 2. D. 312. L. 8об.
- ¹⁷ NA RK. F. П-1. Op. 2. D. 147. L. 17.
- ¹⁸ NA RK. F. P-82. Op. 1. D. 164. L. 103.
- ¹⁹ *Максимов К.Н.* Трагедия народа: Репрессии в Калмыкии: 1918 – 1940-е гг. М., 2004. С. 218.
- ²⁰ Собрание узаконений и распоряжений Рабочего и Крестьянского правительства (СУ РСФСР). 1926. № 75. Ст. 577. Гл. II. Ст. 15.
- ²¹ *Максимов К.Н.* Трагедия народа: Репрессии в Калмыкии: 1918 – 1940-е гг. М., 2004. С. 207.
- ²² NA RK. F. P-3. Op. 2. D. 509. L. 13.
- ²³ *Дорджиева Г.Ш.* Репрессированное буддийское духовенство Калмыкии. Элиста, 2014. С. 13.

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The article, based on previously unknown archival materials in the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia, takes an in-depth look at the policy of the Soviet government towards Buddhism. The nature and reasons for the party-state's accelerated "solution of the religious (Buddhist) question" in Kalmykia in 1917–1924 are thoroughly analyzed. Particular attention is paid to regional authorities, who, acting on Moscow's instructions, conducted an uncompromising struggle against religion. The author comes to the conclusion that the state's policy on religion was clearly repressive in the period under review, and did not accord with the slogans promoted by the Bolshevik party and Soviet government. As a result, not a single khurul remained active in Kalmykia at the end of the 1920s. During the Soviet era, the clergy was

simultaneously subjected to all manner of discriminatory persecution. The anti-religious campaign destroyed the system that reproduced Buddhist knowledge and its best adherents. Yet, despite strict prohibitions and persecutions, authoritarian arbitrariness and lawlessness, the Kalmyk people preserved Buddhist traditions and values, and subsequently survived the harshest moral and physical suffering.

Kalmykia, Kalmyk Autonomous Region, Kalmyks, Buddhism, Buddhist clergy, Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (RCP(b)), Soviet State, religious policy, atheistic propaganda, antireligious campaign, repressions.

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В статье на основе ранее неизвестных архивных материалов Национального архива Республики Калмыкия рассматривается политика органов Советской власти по отношению к буддизму. Обстоятельно проанализирован характер и причины ускоренного «решения религиозного (буддийского) вопроса» партийно-государственными структурами Калмыкии в 1917–1924 гг. Особое внимание уделяется региональным органам власти, которая по указанию центральных властей вела бескомпромиссную борьбу с религией. Автор приходит к выводу, что государственная конфессиональная политика носила в обозначенный период явно репрессивный характер, в основном не согласованная с лозунгами, выдвигаемыми партией большевиков и советским правительством. Политика Советской власти привела к тому, что к концу 1920-х гг. на территории Калмыкии не стало ни одного действующего хурула. В годы Советской власти духовенство одновременно подвергалось всеми видами дискриминационных преследований. Антирелигиозная кампания уничтожила главное – систему воспроизводства буддийского знания и лучших его носителей. И, несмотря на жесткие запреты и гонения, авторитарный произвол и беззаконие, калмыцкий народ сумел сохранить буддийские традиции и ценности, и впоследствии выжить в тяжелейших условиях моральных и физических страданий.

Калмыкия, Калмыцкая автономная область, калмыки, буддизм, буддийские священнослужители, Российская коммунистическая партия (большевиков) (РКП(б)), Советское государство, религиозная политика, атеистическая пропаганда, антирелигиозная кампания, репрессии.