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“I Am Commanded to Make Peace between the Kyrgyz-Kazakh and the Kalmyk People, so that These Two Peoples May Live in Mutual Concord”: Revisiting the Activities of V. N. Tatishchev as the Head of the Kalmyk Commission: The First Half of the 1740s

Abstract

The article is devoted to the peculiarities of administrative and political work carried out by the Russian authorities in the border South-Eastern gubernias to settle differences between the Kalmyks and the Kazakhs in the mid-18th century. In the 1730s, a part of the Kazakh tribes entered into allegiance of Russia, but this did not eliminate all causes of their conflicts with other Russian subjects. The historiography has not paid much attention to relations between the frontier peoples. Published sources do not touch upon this topic; thus, many important facts related to the activities of the Kalmyk Commission (1741–1745) have been overlooked by the scholars. Documents from the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia permit to eliminate this gap in the historiography. They may be used in a comprehensive analysis of the Russo-Kalmyk-Kazakh relations in the mid-18th century. The article draws on them to describe measures taken in 1741–42 by the head of the Kalmyk Commission, Astrakhan Governor V.N. Tatishchev in order to promote peace between the Kalmyks and the Kazakhs. His correspondence with the Kazakh khans and starshinas, the governor of the Kalmyk Khanate, the office of the Orenburg Commission and the local administration is analyzed. It is noted that he was forced to tackle the issues of return of prisoners and of stolen livestock and prevention of raids. V.N. Tatishchev’s work for preparation of the Kalmyk-Kazakh peace congress is underscored. The article analyzes the behavior of the Kazakh nobility and concludes that the nobles were unwilling to attend the congress, preferring not to bind themselves with personal obligations. New documents are being introduced into the scientific use, that permit not only to clarify the nature of relations between the Kalmyks and the Kazakhs in the 1740s, but also to give an idea of the principles and mechanisms of diplomatic and administrative work of central and local authorities in promoting peaceful coexistence of different peoples within Russia.

Keywords

Archive, historical sources, Russian Empire, Kalmyks, Kazakhs, Kalmyk Commission, V.N. Tatishchev, 18th century.

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