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Lidzhieva, Irina V.

Federal Research Centre The Southern Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

Daily Life of the Kalmyk Steppe Officials in the Second Half of the 19th – Early 20th Century

Abstract

Formation of administrative system in the Kalmyk steppe in the first quarter of the 19th century led to emergence in that inorodtsy environment of a professional group of officials characterized by diverse class composition, various levels of education and confessional affiliation, which was

radically different from autochthonous population leading a nomadic life and professing quite different religious views. Despite abundant historiography on the problem of bureaucracy in the Russian Empire, this professional group serving in the inorodtsy directorates remained out of researchers' eye. However, it represents the social capital of the region, thus explaining the interest in the issue. The research assesses everyday life of the ulus administration officials who lived on the territory of the Kalmyk steppe in the second half of the 19th – early 20th century highlighting three areas: image of home and home comfort; intra-family relations; and infrastructure. It draws on documentary materials from the fonds of the National Archive of the Republic of Kalmykia containing personal data of civil servants and paperwork. The socio-demographic picture of the professional group in question was obtained through analysis of service lists and certificates. Integrated use of reconstruction methods and content analysis of documentary materials, as well as descriptions compiled by researchers, permits to reconstruct the appearance of the ulus stavka, administrative center where the officials lived; interior of the trustee's house and to assess his welfare and intra-family communications. The author concludes that everyday life of the ulus officials depended not only on their official position, level of education, financial solvency, and mindset, but also on such factors as natural and climatic conditions, autochthonous population's economic management, and incorporation of the territory in the national socio-economic and political-legal space. Isolation from familiar environment and established communication ties and lack of accessible infrastructure predetermined changing role of women in this micro society, which was formed on the principle of service.

Keywords

Historical sources, integration process in the Russian Empire of the second half of the 19th – early 20th century, daily life, trustee of the ulus, official, inorodtsy directorate, trustee stavka, nomadic inorodtsy, Kalmyk steppe.

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About the authors

Lidzhieva Irina Vladimirovna, PhD in History, Federal Research Centre The Southern Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences, laboratory of history and ethnography, leading researcher, Russian Federation, +7-961-546-97-77, irina-lg@yandex.ru

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