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“Amdo-Mongolia,” Diary of the Well-Known Buryat Scholar and Politician Bazar Baradin: Source Studies Aspects. 1905–06

Abstract

The author introduces into scientific use the diary of Bazar Baradievich Baradin (1878–1937), well-known Buryat scholar and politician, member of the Buryat National Committee, first People’s Commissar of Education of the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR, and first chairman of the Buryat-Mongolian Scientific Committee. Despite his popularity and contribution to science, his life and scholarly activities have not been studied enough. In 1905–07 Baradin made a trip to Mongolia and North-Eastern Tibet – Amdo on the assignment of the Russian Committee for the Study of Central and East Asia. His trip was connected with the 13th Dalai Lama Tubden Gyatso sojourn in Urga. The article reviews his diary, titled “Amdo-Mongolia. Travel diary of a Buddhist Buryat pilgrim through Khalkha-Mongolia, Alashan, and the northeastern outskirts of Tibet – Amdo (1905-07),” now kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where the scholar’s fond was formed. The diary covers Baradin’s journeys from September 1905 to June 1906. It is a 301-page manuscript rewritten and edited from original diary, presumably in 1908 while Baradin prepared his report for the Russian Geographical Society. The manuscript describes his stay in the khoshun (headquarters) of the Mongolian prince Khandorj (Kando-van according to the diary) – Vang Khuree (Van-Kuren), where the Dalai Lama was at prince’s invitation. Comparative-historical method, systemic and source analysis have been used to study the document. The value of the diary lies in the fact that it is the only description of the no longer existing khoshun of Prince Khandorj, Vanh Khuree and of daily life of the field court of the 13th Dalai Lama in autumn–winter of 1905/06. Besides, there are many other fascinating things and events mentioned in the diary, for instance, Khorchin Mongols from the Jerim Seim of South-Eastern Mongolia visiting the Dalai Lama; initiation of Semkyi Choga; the Dalai Lama’s divination on the visit of the Panchen Lama to India; acquaintance and friendship with the old Mongolian scholar Dandar-agramba; petition of Baradin and Namdak Dylykov regarding Buddhist ecumenical council; attack of Mongolian monks on Baradin; celebration of the Tibetan New Year, etc. The author is of opinion that Bazar Baradin’s “Amdo-Mongolia” is an extremely valuable historical, ethnographic, and religious studies source, which sheds light on unknown pages of history and culture of Mongolia and Tibet in 1905–06. Publication and further detailed study of this unique source is planned.

Keywords

Historical source, Bazar Baradin, travel diary, prince Handorj, 13th Dalai Lama, Mongolia, Eastern Tibet, Amdo.

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